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COUSIN HENRY.

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By ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

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CONTENTS.

COUSIN HENRY.

CHAPTER I.

UNCLE INDEFER.

"I HAVE a conscience, my dear, on this matter," said an old gentleman to a young lady, as the two were sitting in the breakfast parlour of a country house which looked down from the cliffs over the sea on the coast of Carmarthenshire.

"And so have I, Uncle Indefer; and as my conscience is backed by my inclination, whereas yours is not—"

"You think that I shall give way?"

"I did not mean that."

"What then?"

"If I could only make you understand how very strong is my inclination, or disinclination—how impossible to be conquered, then—"

"What next?"

"Then you would know that I could never give way, as you call it, and you would go to work with your own conscience to see whether it be imperative with you or not. You may be sure of this,—I shall never say a word to you in opposition to your conscience. If there be a word to be spoken it must come from yourself."

There was a long pause in the conversation, a silence for an hour, during which the girl went in and out of the room and settled herself down at her work. Then the old man went back abruptly to the subject they had discussed. "I shall obey my conscience."

"You ought to do so, Uncle Indefer. What should a man obey but his conscience?"

"Though it will break my heart."

"No; no, no!"

"And will ruin you."

"That is a flea's bite. I can brave my ruin easily, but not your broken heart."

"Why should there be either, Isabel?"

"Nay, sir; have you not said but now, because of our consciences? Not to save your heart from breaking,—though I think your heart is dearer to me than anything else in the world,—could I marry my cousin Henry. We must die together, both of us, you and I, or live broken-hearted, or what not, sooner than that. Would I not do anything possible at your bidding?"

"I used to think so."

"But it is impossible for a young woman with a respect for herself such as I have to submit herself to a man that she loathes. Do as your conscience bids you with the old house. Shall I be less tender to you while you live because I shall have to leave the place when you are dead? Shall I accuse you of

injustice or unkindness in my heart? Never! All that is only an outside circumstance to me, comparatively of little moment. But to be the wife of a man I despise!" Then she got up and left the room.

* * * * *

A month passed by before the old man returned to the subject, which he did seated in the same room, at the same hour of the day,—at about four o'clock, when the dinner things had been removed.

"Isabel," he said, "I cannot help myself."

"As to what, Uncle Indefer?" She knew very well what was the matter in which, as he said, he could not help himself. Had there been anything in which his age had wanted assistance from her youth there would have been no hesitation between them; no daughter was ever more tender; no father was ever more trusting. But on this subject it was necessary that he should speak more plainly before she could reply to him.

"As to your cousin and the property."

"Then in God's name do not trouble yourself further in looking for help where there is none to be had. You mean that the estate ought to go to a man and not to a woman?"

"It ought to go to a Jones."

"I am not a Jones, nor likely to become a Jones."

"You are as near to me as he is,—and so much dearer!"

"But not on that account a Jones. My name is Isabel Brodrick. A woman not born to be a Jones may have the luck to become one by marriage, but that will never be the case with me."

"You should not laugh at that which is to me a duty."

"Dear, dear uncle!" she said, caressing him, "if I seemed to laugh"—and she certainly had laughed when she spoke of the luck of becoming a Jones—"it is only that you

may feel how little importance I attach to it all on my own account."

"But it is important,—terribly important!"

"Very well. Then go to work with two things in your mind fixed as fate. One is that you must leave Llanfeare to your nephew Henry Jones, and the other that I will not marry your nephew Henry Jones. When it is all settled it will be just as though the old place were entailed, as it used to be."

"I wish it were."

"So do I, if it would save you trouble."

"But it isn't the same;—it can't be the same. In getting back the land your grandfather sold I have spent the money I had saved for you."

"It shall be all the same to me, and I will take pleasure in thinking that the old family place shall remain as you would have it. I can be proud of the family though I can never bear the name."

"You do not care a straw for the family."

"You should not say that, Uncle Indefer. It is not true. I care enough for the family to sympathize with you altogether in what you are doing, but not enough for the property to sacrifice myself in order that I might have a share in it."

"I do not know why you should think so much evil of Henry."

"Do you know any reason why I should think well enough of him to become his wife? I do not. In marrying a man a woman should be able to love every little trick belonging to him. The parings of his nails should be dear to her. Every little wish of his should be a care to her. It should be pleasant to her to serve him in things most menial. Would it be so to me, do you think, with Henry Jones?"

"You are always full of poetry and books."

"I should be full of something very bad if I were to allow myself to stand at the altar with him. Drop it, Uncle Indefer. Get it out of your mind as a thing quite impossible.

It is the one thing I can't and won't do, even for you. It is the one thing that you ought not to ask me to do. Do as you like with the property,—as you think right."

"It is not as I like."

"As you conscience bids you, then; and I with myself, which is the only little thing that I have in the world, will do as I like, or as my conscience bids me."

These last words she spoke almost roughly, and as she said them she left him, walking out of the room with an air of offended pride. But in this there was a purpose. If she were hard to him, hard and obstinate in her determination, then would he be enabled to be so also to her in his determination, with less of pain to himself. She felt it to be her duty to teach him that he was justified in doing what he liked with his property, because she intended to do what she liked with herself. Not only would she not say a word towards dissuading him from this

change in his old intentions, but she would make the change as little painful to him as possible by teaching him to think that it was justified by her own manner to him.

For there was a change, not only in his mind, but in his declared intentions. Llanfeare had belonged to Indefer Joneses for many generations. When the late Squire had died, now twenty years ago, there had been remaining out of ten children only one, the eldest, to whom the property now belonged. Four or five coming in succession after him had died without issue. Then there had been a Henry Jones, who had gone away and married, had become the father of the Henry Jones above mentioned, and had then also departed. The youngest, a daughter, had married an attorney named Brodrick, and she also had died, having no other child but Isabel. Mr. Brodrick had married again, and was now the father of a large family, living at Hereford, where he carried on his business.

He was not very "well-to-do" in the world. The new Mrs. Brodrick had preferred her own babies to Isabel, and Isabel when she was fifteen years of age had gone to her bachelor uncle at Llanfeare. There she had lived for the last ten years, making occasional visits to her father at Hereford.

Mr. Indefer Jones, who was now between seventy and eighty years old, was a gentleman who through his whole life had been disturbed by reflections, fears, and hopes as to the family property on which he had been born, on which he had always lived, in possession of which he would certainly die, and as to the future disposition of which it was his lot in life to be altogether responsible. It had been entailed upon him before his birth in his grandfather's time, when his father was about to be married. But the entail had not been carried on. There had come no time in which this Indefer Jones had been about to be married, and the former old man having

been given to extravagance, and been generally in want of money, had felt it more comfortable to be without an entail. His son had occasionally been induced to join with him in raising money. Thus not only since he had himself owned the estate, but before his father's death, there had been forced upon him reflections as to the destination of Llanfeare. At fifty he had found himself unmarried, and unlikely to marry. His brother Henry was then alive; but Henry had disgraced the family,—had run away with a married woman whom he had married after a divorce, had taken to race courses and billiard-rooms, and had been altogether odious to his brother Indefer. Nevertheless the boy which had come from this marriage, a younger Henry, had been educated at his expense, and had occasionally been received at Llanfeare. He had been popular with no one there, having been found to be a sly boy, given to lying, and, as even the servants said about the place, unlike a

Jones of Llanfeare. Then had come the time in which Isabel had been brought to Llanfeare. Henry had been sent away from Oxford for some offence not altogether trivial, and the Squire had declared to himself and others that Llanfeare should never fall into his hands.

Isabel had so endeared herself to him that before she had been two years in the house she was the young mistress of the place. Everything that she did was right in his eyes. She might have anything that she would ask, only that she would ask for nothing. At this time the cousin had been taken into an office in London, and had become,—so it was said of him,—a steady young man of business. But still, when allowed to show himself at Llanfeare, he was unpalatable to them all—unless it might be to the old Squire. It was certainly the case that in his office in London he made himself useful, and it seemed that he had abandoned that practice of running into debt and hav-

ing the bills sent down to Llanfeare which he had adopted early in his career.

During all this time the old Squire was terribly troubled about the property. His will was always close at his hand. Till Isabel was twenty-one this will had always been in Henry's favour,—with a clause, however, that a certain sum of money which the Squire possessed should go to her. Then in his disgust towards his nephew he changed his purpose, and made another will in Isabel's favour. This remained in existence as his last resolution for three years; but they had been three years of misery to him. He had endured but badly the idea that the place should pass away out of what he regarded as the proper male line. To his thinking it was simply an accident that the power of disposing of the property should be in his hands. It was a religion to him that a landed estate in Britain should go from father to eldest son, and in default of a son to the first male heir. Britain

would not be ruined because Llanfeare should be allowed to go out of the proper order. But Britain would be ruined if Britons did not do their duty in that sphere of life to which it had pleased God to call them; and in this case his duty was to maintain the old order of things.

And during this time an additional trouble added itself to those existing. Having made up his mind to act in opposition to his own principles, and to indulge his own heart; having declared both to his nephew and to his niece that Isabel should be his heir, there came to him, as a consolation in his misery, the power of repurchasing a certain fragment of the property which his father, with his assistance had sold. The loss of these acres had been always a sore wound to him, not because of his lessened income, but from a feeling that no owner of an estate should allow it to be diminished during his holding of it. He never saw those separated fields estranged

from Llanfeare, but he grieved in his heart. That he might get them back again he had saved money since Llanfeare had first become his own. Then had come upon him the necessity of providing for Isabel. But when with many groans he had decided that Isabel should be the heir, the money could be allowed to go for its intended purpose. It had so gone, and then his conscience had become too strong for him, and another will was made.

It will be seen how he had endeavoured to reconcile things. When it was found that Henry Jones was working like a steady man at the London office to which he was attached, that he had sown his wild oats, then Uncle Indefer began to ask himself why all his dearest wishes should not be carried out together by a marriage between the cousins. "I don't care a bit for his wild oats," Isabel had said, almost playfully, when the idea had first been mooted to her. "His oats are too tame for me rather than too wild. Why can't he look

any one in the face?" Then her uncle had been angry with her, thinking that she was allowing a foolish idea to interfere with the happiness of them all.

But his anger with her was never enduring; and, indeed, before the time at which our story commenced he had begun to acknowledge to himself that he might rather be afraid of her anger than she of his. There was a courage about her which nothing could dash. She had grown up under his eyes strong, brave, sometimes almost bold, with a dash of humour, but always quite determined in her own ideas of wrong or right. He had in truth been all but afraid of her when he found himself compelled to tell her of the decision to which his conscience compelled him. But the will was made,—the third, perhaps the fourth or fifth, which had seemed to him to be necessary since his mind had been exercised in this matter. He made this will, which he assured himself should be the last, leaving Llanfeare

to his nephew on condition that he should prefix the name of Indefer to that of Jones, and adding certain stipulations as to further entail. Then everything of which he might die possessed, except Llanfeare itself and the furniture in the house, he left to his niece Isabel.

"We must get rid of the horses," he said to her about a fortnight after the conversation last recorded.

"Why that?"

"My will has been made, and there will be so little now for you, that we must save what we can before I die."

"Oh, bother me!" said Isabel, laughing.

"Do you suppose it is not dreadful to me to have to reflect how little I can do for you? I may, perhaps, live for two years, and we may save six or seven hundred a year. I have put a charge on the estate for four thousand pounds. The property is only a small thing, after all;—not above fifteen hundred a year."

"I will not hear of the horses being sold, and there is an end of it. You have been taken out about the place every day for the last twenty years, and it would crush me if I were to see a change. You have done the best you can, and now leave it all in God's hands. Pray,—pray let there be no more talking about it. If you only knew how welcome he is to it!"

CHAPTER II.

ISABEL BRODRICK.

When Mr. Indefer Jones spoke of living for two years, he spoke more hopefully of himself than the doctor was wont to speak to Isabel. The doctor from Carmarthen visited Llanfeare twice a week, and having become intimate and confidential with Isabel, had told her that the candle had nearly burnt itself down to the socket. There was no special disease, but he was a worn-out old man. It was well that he should allow himself to be driven out about the place every day. It was well that he should be encouraged to get up after breakfast, and to eat his dinner in the middle of the day after his old fashion. It was well to do everything

around him as though he were not a confirmed invalid. But the doctor thought that he would not last long. The candle, as the doctor said, had nearly burnt itself out in the socket.

And yet there was no apparent decay in the old man's intellect. He had never been much given to literary pursuits, but that which he had always done he did still. A daily copy of whatever might be the most thoroughly Conservative paper of the day he always read carefully from the beginning to the end; and a weekly copy of the *Guardian* nearly filled up the hours which were devoted to study. On Sunday he read two sermons through, having been forbidden by the doctor to take his place in the church because of the draughts, and thinking, apparently, that it would be mean and wrong to make that an excuse for shirking an onerous duty. An hour a day was devoted by him religiously to the Bible. The rest of his time was occupied by

the care of his property. Nothing gratified him so much as the coming in of one of his tenants, all of whom were so intimately known to him that, old as he was, he never forgot the names even of their children. The idea of raising a rent was abominable to him. Around the house there were about two hundred acres which he was supposed to farm. On these some half-dozen worn-out old labourers were maintained in such a manner that no return from the land was ever forthcoming. On this subject he would endure remonstrance from no one,—not even from Isabel.

Such as he has been here described, he would have been a happy old man during these last half-dozen years, had not his mind been exercised day by day, and hour by hour, by these cares as to the property which were ever present to him. A more loving heart than his could hardly be found in a human bosom, and all its power of love had been bestowed on Isabel. Nor could any man be

subject to a stronger feeling of duty than that which pervaded him; and this feeling of duty induced him to declare to himself that in reference to his property he was bound to do that which was demanded of him by the established custom of his order. In this way he had become an unhappy man, troubled by conflicting feelings, and was now, as he was approaching the hour of his final departure, tormented by the thought that he would leave his niece without sufficient provision for her wants.

But the thing was done. The new will was executed and tied in on the top of the bundle which contained the other wills which he had made. Then, naturally enough, there came back upon him the idea, hardly amounting to a hope, that something might even yet occur to set matters right by a marriage between the cousins. Isabel had spoken to him so strongly on the subject that he did not dare to repeat his request. And yet, he thought, there was no good reason why they two

should not become man and wife. Henry, as far as he could learn, had given up his bad courses. The man was not evil to the eye, a somewhat cold-looking man rather than otherwise, tall with well-formed features, with light hair and blue-grey eyes, not subject to be spoken of as being unlike a gentleman, if not noticeable as being like one. That inability of his to look one in the face when he was speaking had not struck the Squire forcibly as it had done Isabel. He would not have been agreeable to the Squire had there been no bond between them,—would still have been the reverse, as he had been formerly, but for that connexion. But, as things were, there was room for an attempt at love; and if for an attempt at love on his part, why not also on Isabel's? But he did not dare to bid Isabel even to try to love this cousin.

"I think I would like to have him down again soon," he said to his niece.

"By all means. The more the tenants

know him the better it will be. I can go to Hereford at any time."

"Why should you run away from me?"

"Not from you, Uncle Indefer, but from him."

"And why from him?"

"Because I don't love him."

"Must you always run away from the people you do not love?"

"Yes, when the people, or person, is a man, and when the man has been told that he ought specially to love me."

When she said this she looked into her uncle's face, smiling indeed, but still asking a serious question. He dared to make no answer, but by his face he told the truth. He had declared his wishes to his nephew.

"Not that I mean to be in the least afraid of him," she continued. "Perhaps it will be better that I should see him, and if he speaks to me have it out with him. How long would he stay?"

"A month, I suppose. He can come for a month."

"Then I'll stay for the first week. I must go to Hereford before the summer is over. Shall I write to him?" Then it was settled as she had proposed. She wrote all her uncle's letters, even to her cousin Henry, unless there was, by chance, something very special to be communicated. On the present occasion she sent the invitation as follows:—

"Llanfeare, 17th June, 187—, Monday.

"My dear Henry,—Your uncle wants you to come here on the 1st July and stay for a month. The 1st of July will be Monday. Do not travel on a Sunday as you did last time, because he does not like it. I shall be here the first part of the time, and then I shall go to Hereford. It is in the middle of the summer only that I can leave him. Your affectionate cousin,

"Isabel Brodrick."

She had often felt herself compelled to

sign herself to him in that way, and it had gone much against the grain with her; but to a cousin it was the ordinary thing, as it is to call any indifferent man "My dear sir," though he be not in the least dear. And so she had reconciled herself to the falsehood.

Another incident in Isabel's life must be told to the reader. It was her custom to go to Hereford at least once a year, and there to remain at her father's house for a month. These visits had been made annually since she had lived at Llanfeare, and in this way she had become known to many of the Hereford people. Among others who had thus become her friends there was a young clergyman, William Owen, a minor canon attached to the cathedral, who during her last visit had asked her to be his wife. At that time she had supposed herself to be her uncle's heiress, and looking at herself as the future owner of Llanfeare had con-

sidered herself bound to regard such an offer in reference to her future duties and to the obedience which she owed to her uncle. She never told her lover, nor did she ever quite tell herself, that she would certainly accept him if bound by no such considerations; but we may tell the reader that it was so. Had she felt herself to be altogether free, she would have given herself to the man who had offered her his love. As it was she answered him anything but hopefully, saying nothing of any passion of her own, speaking of herself as though she were altogether at the disposal of her uncle. "He has decided now," she said, "that when he is gone the property is to be mine." The minor canon, who had heard nothing of this, drew himself up as though about to declare in his pride that he had not intended to ask for the hand of the lady of Llanfeare. "That would make no difference in me," she continued, reading plainly the ex-

pression in the young man's face. "My regard would be swayed neither one way nor the other by any feeling of that kind. But as he has chosen to make me his daughter, I must obey him as his daughter. It is not probable that he will consent to such a marriage."

Then there had been nothing further between them till Isabel, on her return to Llanfeare, had written to him to say that her uncle had decided against the marriage, and that his decision was final.

Now in all this Isabel had certainly been hardly used, though her ill-usage had in part been due to her own reticence as to her own feelings. When she told the Squire that the offer had been made to her, she did so as if she herself had been almost indifferent.

"William Owen!" the Squire had said, repeating the name; "his grandfather kept the inn at Pembroke!"

"I believe he did," said Isabel calmly.

"And you would wish to make him owner of Llanfeare?"

"I did not say so," rejoined Isabel. "I have told you what occurred, and have asked you what you thought."

Then the Squire shook his head, and there was an end of it. The letter was written to the minor canon telling him that the Squire's decision was final.

In all this there had been no allusion to love on the part of Isabel. Had there been, her uncle could hardly have pressed upon her the claims of his nephew. But her manner in regard to the young clergyman had been so cold as to leave upon her uncle an impression that the matter was one of but little moment. To Isabel it was matter of infinite moment. And yet when she was asked again and again to arrange all the difficulties of the family by marrying her cousin, she was forced to carry on

the conversation as though no such person existed as her lover at Hereford.

And yet the Squire remembered it all,—remembered that when he had thus positively objected to the grandson of the innkeeper, he had done so because he had felt it to be his duty to keep the grandson of an innkeeper out of Llanfeare. That the grandson of old Thomas Owen, of the Pembroke Lion, should reign at Llanfeare in the place of an Indefer Jones had been abominable to him. To prevent that had certainly been within his duties. But it was very different now, when he would leave his girl poorly provided for, without a friend and without a roof of her own over her head! And yet, though her name was Brodrick, she, too, was a Jones; and her father, though an attorney, had come of a family nearly as good as his own. In no case could it be right that she should marry the grandson of old Thomas Owen. Therefore, hitherto, he had never again referred to that

proposal of marriage. Should she again have spoken of it his answer might perhaps have been less decided; but neither had she again spoken of the clergyman.

All this was hard upon Isabel, who, if she said nothing, still thought of her lover. And it must be acknowledged also that though she did not speak, still she thought of her future prospects. She had laughed at the idea of being solicitous as to her inheritance. She had done so in order that she might thereby lessen the trouble of her uncle's mind; but she knew as well as did another the difference between the position which had been promised her as owner of Llanfeare, and that to which she would be reduced as the stepdaughter of a stepmother who did not love her. She knew, too, that she had been cold to William Owen, giving him no sort of encouragement, having seemed to declare to him that she had rejected him because she was her uncle's heiress. And she knew also,—or thought that

she knew,—that she was not possessed of those feminine gifts which probably might make a man constant under difficulties. No more had been heard of William Owen during the last nine months. Every now and then a letter would come to her from one of her younger sisters, who now had their own anxieties and their own loves, but not a word was there in one of them of William Owen. Therefore, it may be said that that last change in her uncle's purpose had fallen upon her with peculiar hardness.

But she never uttered a complaint, or even looked one. As for utterance there was no one to whom she could have spoken it. There had never been many words between her and her own family as to the inheritance. As she had been reticent to her father so had he to her. The idea in the attorney's house at Hereford was that she was stubborn, conceited, and disdainful. It may be that in regard to her stepmother there was something

of this, but, let that be as it might, there had been but little confidence between them as to matters at Llanfeare. It was, no doubt, supposed by her father that she was to be her uncle's heir.

Conceited, perhaps, she was as to certain gifts of character. She did believe herself to be strong of purpose and capable of endurance. But in some respects she was humble enough. She gave herself no credit for feminine charms such as the world loves. In appearance she was one calculated to attract attention,—somewhat tall, well set on her limbs, active, and of good figure; her brow was broad and fine, her grey eyes were bright and full of intelligence, her nose and mouth were well formed, and there was not a mean feature in her face. But there was withal a certain roughness about her, an absence of feminine softness in her complexion, which, to tell the truth of her, was more conspicuous to her own eyes than to any others. The farmers

and their wives about the place would declare that Miss Isabel was the finest young woman in South Wales. With the farmers and their wives she was on excellent terms, knowing all their ways, and anxious as to all their wants. With the gentry around she concerned herself but little. Her uncle's habits were not adapted to the keeping of much company, and to her uncle's habits she had fitted herself altogether. It was on this account that neither did she know the young men around, nor did they know her. And then, because no such intimacies had grown up she told herself that she was unlike other girls,—that she was rough, unattractive, and unpopular.

Then the day came for the arrival of Henry Jones, during the approach to which Uncle Indefer had, from day to day, become more and more uneasy. Isabel had ceased to say a word against him. When he had been proposed to her as a lover she had declared that she had loathed him. Now that suggestion

had been abandoned, or left in abeyance. Therefore she dealt with his name and with his coming as she might with that of any other guest. She looked to his room, and asked questions as to his comfort. Would it not be well to provide a separate dinner for him, seeing that three o'clock would be regarded as an awkward hour by a man from London? "If he doesn't like it, he had better go back to London," said the old Squire in anger. But the anger was not intended against his girl, but against the man who by the mere force of his birth was creating such a sea of troubles.

"I have told you what my intentions are," the Squire said to his nephew on the evening of his arrival.

"I am sure that I am very much obliged to you, my dear uncle."

"You need not be in the least obliged to me. I have done what I conceive to be a duty. I can still change it if I find that you do not

deserve it. As for Isabel, she deserves everything that can be done for her. Isabel has never given me the slightest cause for displeasure. I doubt whether there is a better creature in the world living than Isabel. She deserves everything. But as you are the male heir, I think it right that you should follow me in the property—unless you show yourself to be unworthy."

This was certainly a greeting hard to be endured,—a speech very difficult to answer. Nevertheless it was satisfactory, if only the old Squire would not again change his mind. The young man had thought much about it, and had come to the resolution that the best way to insure the good things promised him would be to induce Isabel to be his wife.

"I'm sure she is all that you say, Uncle Indefer," he replied.

Uncle Indefer grunted, and told him that if he wanted any supper, he had better go and get it.

CHAPTER III.

COUSIN HENRY.

Cousin Henry found his position to be difficult and precarious. That suggestion of his uncle's,—or rather assertion,—that he could still change his mind was disagreeable. No doubt he could do so, and, as Cousin Henry thought, would be the very man to do it, if angered, thwarted, or even annoyed. He knew that more than one will had already been made and set aside. Cousin Henry had turned the whole matter very much in his mind since he had become cognizant of his uncle's character. However imprudent he might have been in his earlier days, he was now quite alive to the importance of being

Squire of Llanfeare. There was nothing that he was not ready to do to please and conciliate his uncle. Llanfeare without Isabel as a burden would no doubt be preferable, but he was quite ready to marry Isabel to-morrow, if Isabel would only accept him. The game he had to play was for Llanfeare. It was to be Llanfeare or nothing. The position offered to him was to come, not from love, but from a sense of duty on the part of the old man. If he could keep the old man firm to that idea, Llanfeare would be his own; but should he be excluded from that inheritance, there would be no lesser prize by which he might reconcile himself to the loss. His uncle would not leave him anything from love. All this he understood thoroughly, and was therefore not unnaturally nervous as to his own conduct at the present crisis.

It was only too manifest to him that his uncle did in fact dislike him. At their very first interview he was made to listen to praises of

Isabel and threats against himself. He was quite prepared to put up with both, or with any other disagreeable hardship which might be inflicted upon him, if only he could do so successfully. But he believed that his best course would be to press his suit with Isabel. Should he do so successfully, he would at any rate be safe. Should she be persistent in refusing him, which he believed to be probable, then he would have shown himself desirous of carrying out his uncle's wishes. As to all this he was clear-sighted enough. But he did not quite perceive the state of his uncle's mind in regard to himself. He did not understand how painfully the old man was still vacillating between affection and duty; nor did he fathom the depth of the love which his uncle felt for Isabel. Had he been altogether wise in the matter, he would have kept out of his uncle's presence, and have devoted himself to the tenants and the land; but in lieu of this, he intruded himself as much as possible into his

uncle's morning room, often to the exclusion of Isabel. Now it had come to pass that Uncle Indefer was never at his ease unless his niece were with him.

"Nobody can be more attached to another than I am to Isabel," said the nephew to his uncle on the third morning of his arrival. Whereupon Uncle Indefer grunted. The more he saw of the man, the less he himself liked the idea of sacrificing Isabel to such a husband. "I shall certainly do my best to carry out your wishes."

"My wishes have reference solely to her."

"Exactly, sir; I understand that completely. As she is not to be the heiress, the best thing possible is to be done for her."

"You think that marrying you would be the best thing possible!" This the uncle said in a tone of scorn which must have been very hard to bear. And it was unjust too, as the unfortunate nephew had certainly not in-

tended to speak of himself personally as being the best thing possible for Isabel.

But this too had to be borne. "I meant, sir, that if she would accept my hand, she would have pretty nearly as great an interest in the property as I myself."

"She would have much more," said Uncle Indefer angrily. "She knows every man, woman, and child about the place. There is not one of them who does not love her. And so they ought, for she has been their best friend. As far as they are concerned it is almost cruel that they should not be left in her hands."

"So it will be, sir, if she will consent to do as you and I wish."

"Wish! Pshaw!" Then he repeated his grunts, turning his shoulder round against his nephew, and affecting to read the newspaper which he had held in his hand during the conversation. It must be acknowledged that the part to be played by the intended heir was very

difficult. He could perceive that his uncle hated him, but he could not understand that he might best lessen that hatred by relieving his uncle of his presence. There he sat looking at the empty grate, and pretending now and again to read an old newspaper which was lying on the table, while his uncle fumed and grunted. During every moment that was so passed Uncle Indefer was asking himself whether that British custom as to male heirs was absolutely essential to the welfare of the country. Here were two persons suggested to his mind, one of whom was to be his future successor. One of them was undoubtedly the sweetest human being that had ever crossed his path; the other,—as he was inclined to think at the present moment,—was the least sweet. And as they were to him, would they not be to the tenants whose welfare was to depend so much on the future owner of the property? The longer that he endured the presence of the man the more desirous did he feel of turn-

ing to the drawer which was close at hand, and destroying the topmost of those documents which lay there tied in a bundle together.

But he did not allow himself to be at once driven to a step so unreasonable. The young man had done nothing which ought to offend him, —had, indeed, only obeyed him in coming down to South Wales. That custom of the country was good and valid, and wise. If he believed in anything of the world worldly, he believed in primogeniture in respect of land. Though Isabel was ever so sweet, duty was duty. Who was he that he should dare to say to himself that he could break through what he believed to be a law on his conscience without a sin? If he might permit himself to make a special exemption for himself in the indulgence of his own affection, then why might not another, and another, and so on? Did he not know that it would have been better that the whole thing should have been settled for him by an entail?

And, if so, how could it be right that he should act in opposition to the spirit of such an entail, merely because he had the power to do so? Thus he argued with himself again and again; but these arguments would never become strong till his nephew had relieved him of his presence.

While he was so arguing, Cousin Henry was trying his hand with Isabel. There had been but a week for him to do it, and three days had already passed away. At the end of the week Isabel was to go to Hereford, and Henry, as far as he knew, was still expected by his uncle to make an offer to his cousin. And, as regarded himself, he was well enough disposed to do so. He was a man with no strong affections, but also with no strong aversions,—except that at present he had a strong affection for Llanfeare, and a strong aversion to the monotonous office in which he was wont to earn his daily bread up in London. And he, too, was desirous of doing his duty,—as

long as the doing of his duty might tend to the desired possession of Llanfeare. He was full of the idea that a great deal was due to Isabel. A great deal was certainly due to Isabel, if only, by admitting so much, his possession of Llanfeare was to be assured.

"So you are going away in two or three days?" he said to her.

"In four days. I am to start on Monday."

"That is very soon. I am so sorry that you are to leave us! But I suppose it is best that dear Uncle Indefer should not be left alone."

"I should have gone at this time in any case," said Isabel, who would not allow it to be supposed that he could fill her place near their uncle.

"Nevertheless I am sorry that you should not have remained while I am here. Of course it cannot be helped." Then he paused, but she had not a word further to say. She could see by the anxiety displayed in his face, and

by a more than usually unnatural tone in his voice, that he was about to make his proposition. She was quite prepared for it, and remained silent, fixed, and attentive. "Isabel," he said, "I suppose Uncle Indefer has told you what he intends?"

"I should say so. I think he always tells me what he intends."

"About the property I mean."

"Yes; about the property. I believe he has made a will leaving it to you. I believe he has done this, not because he loves you the best, but because he thinks it ought to go to the male heir. I quite agree with him that these things should not be governed by affection. He is so good that he will certainly do what he believes to be his duty."

"Nevertheless the effect is the same."

"Oh yes; as regards you, the effect will be the same. You will have the property, whether it comes from love or duty."

"And you will lose it."

"I cannot lose what never was mine," she said, smiling.

"But why should we not both have it,—one as well as the other?"

"No; we can't do that."

"Yes, we can; if you will do what I wish, and what he wishes also. I love you with all my heart."

She opened her eyes as though driven to do so by surprise. She knew that she should not have expressed herself in that way, but she could not avoid the temptation.

"I do, indeed, with all my heart. Why should we not—marry, you know? Then the property would belong to both of us."

"Yes; then it would."

"Why should we not; eh, Isabel?" Then he approached her as though about to make some ordinary symptom of a lover's passion.

"Sit down there, Henry, and I will tell you why we cannot do that. I do not love you in the least."

"You might learn to love me."

"Never; never! That lesson would be impossible to me. Now let there be an end of it. Uncle Indefer has, I dare say, asked you to make this proposition."

"He wrote a letter, just saying that he would like it."

"Exactly so. You have found yourself compelled to do his bidding, and you have done it. Then let there be an end of it. I would not marry an angel even to oblige him or to get Llanfeare; and you are not an angel,—to my way of thinking."

"I don't know about angels," he said, trying still to be good-humoured.

"No, no. That was my nonsense. There is no question of angels. But not for all Llanfeare, not even to oblige him, would I undertake to marry a man, even if I were near to loving him. I should have to love him entirely, without reference to Llanfeare. I am not at all near to loving you."

"Why not, Isabel?" he asked foolishly.

"Because,—because,—because you are odious to me!"

"Isabel!"

"I beg your pardon. I should not have said so. It was very wrong; but, then, why did you ask so foolish a question? Did I not tell you to let there be an end of it? And now will you let me give you one little bit of advice?"

"What is it?" he asked angrily. He was beginning to hate her, though he was anxious to repress his hatred, lest by indulging it he should injure his prospects.

"Do not say a word about me to my uncle. It will be better for you not to tell him that there has been between us any such interview as this. If he did once wish that you and I should become man and wife, I do not think that he wishes it now. Let the thing slide, as they say. He has quite made up his mind in your favour, because it is his duty. Unless you do some-

thing to displease him very greatly, he will make no further change. Do not trouble him more than you can help by talking to him on things that are distasteful. Anything in regard to me, coming from you, will be distasteful to him. You had better go about among the farms, and see the tenants, and learn the condition of everything. And then talk to him about that. Whatever you do, never suggest that the money coming from it all is less than it ought to be. That is my advice. And now, if you please, you and I need not talk about it any more." Then she got up and left the room without waiting for a reply.

When he was alone he resolved upon complying with her advice, at any rate in one respect. He would not renew his offer of marriage; nor would he hold any further special conversation with her. Of course, she was hateful to him, having declared so plainly to him her own opinion regarding himself.

He had made the offer, and had thereby done his duty. He had made the offer, and had escaped.

But he did not at all believe in the sincerity of her advice as to their uncle. His heart was throbbing with the desire to secure the inheritance to himself,—and so he thought, no doubt, was hers as to herself. It might be that the old man's intention would depend upon his obedience, and if so, it was certainly necessary that the old man should know that he had been obedient. Of course, he would tell the old man what he had done.

But he said not a word till Isabel had gone. He did take her advice about the land and the tenants, but hardly to much effect. If there were a falling roof here or a half-hung door there, he displayed his zeal by telling the Squire of these defaults. But the Squire hated to hear of such defaults. It must be acknowledged that it would have required a man of very great parts to have given

satisfaction in the position in which this young man was placed.

But as soon as Isabel was gone he declared his obedience.

"I have asked her, sir, and she has refused me," he said in a melancholy, low, and sententious voice.

"What did you expect?"

"At any rate, I did as you would have me."

"Was she to jump down your throat when you asked her?"

"She was very decided,—very. Of course, I spoke of your wishes."

"I have not any wishes."

"I thought that you desired it."

"So I did, but I have changed my mind. It would not do at all. I almost wonder how you could have had the courage to ask her. I don't suppose that you have the insight to see that she is different from other girls."

"Oh, yes; I perceived that."

"And yet you would go and ask her to be your wife off-hand, just as though you were going to buy a horse! I suppose you told her that it would be a good thing because of the estate?"

"I did mention it," said the young man, altogether astounded and put beyond himself by his uncle's manner and words.

"Yes; just as if it were a bargain! If you will consent to put up with me as a husband, why, then you can go shares with me in the property. That was the kind of thing, wasn't it? And then you come and tell me that you have done your duty by making the offer!"

The heir expectant was then convinced that it would have been better for him to have followed the advice which Isabel had given him, but yet he could not bring himself to believe that the advice had been disinterested. Why

should Isabel have given him disinterested advice in opposition to her own prospects? Must not Isabel's feeling about the property be the same as his own?

CHAPTER IV.

THE SQUIRE'S DEATH.

With a sore heart Isabel went her way to Hereford,—troubled because she saw nothing but sorrow and vexation in store for her uncle.

"I know that I am getting weaker every day," he said. And yet it was not long since he had spoken of living for two years.

"Shall I stay?" asked Isabel.

"No; that would be wrong. You ought to go to your father. I suppose that I shall live till you come back."

"Oh, Uncle Indefer!"

"What if I did die? It is not that that troubles me." Then she kissed him and left

him. She knew how vain it was to ask any further questions, understanding thoroughly the nature of his sorrow. The idea that this nephew must be the master of Llanfeare was so bitter to him that he could hardly endure it; and then, added to this, was the vexation of the nephew's presence. That three weeks should be passed alone with the man,—three weeks of the little that was left to him of life, seemed to be a cruel addition to the greater sorrow! But Isabel went, and the uncle and nephew were left to do the best they could with each other's company.

Isabel had not seen Mr. Owen or heard from him since the writing of that letter in which she had told him of her uncle's decision. Now it would be necessary that she should meet him, and she looked forward to doing so almost with fear and trembling. On one point she had made up her mind, or thought that she had made up her mind. As she had refused him when supposed to be heiress of Llanfeare,

she certainly would not accept him, should he feel himself constrained by a sense of honour to renew his offer to her now that her position was so different. She had not accused him in her own heart of having come to her because of her supposed wealth. Thinking well of him in other matters, she thought well of him also in that. But still there was the fact that she had refused him when supposed to be an heiress; and not even to secure her happiness would she allow him to think that she accepted him because of her altered circumstances. And yet she was in love with him, and had now acknowledged to herself that it was so. Her position in this as in all things seemed to be so cruel! Had she been the heiress of Llanfeare she could not have married him, because it would then have been her duty to comply with the wishes of her uncle. No such duty would now be imposed upon her, at any rate after her uncle's death. As simple Isabel Brodrick she might marry whom she would without

bringing discredit upon the Indefer Joneses. But that which she had been constrained to do before her uncle had changed his purpose now tied her hands.

It did seem to her cruel; but she told herself that it was peculiarly her duty to bear such cruelty without complaint. Of her uncle's intense love to her she was fully aware, and, loving him as warmly, was prepared to bear everything on his account. His vacillation had been unfortunate for her, but in everything he had done the best according to his lights. Perhaps there was present to her mind something of the pride of a martyr. Perhaps she gloried a little in the hardship of her position. But she was determined to have her glory and her martyrdom all to herself. No human being should ever hear from her lips a word of complaint against her Uncle Indefer.

The day after her arrival her father asked her a few questions as to her uncle's intentions in reference to the property.

"I think it is all settled," she said. "I think it has been left to my Cousin Henry."

"Then he has changed his mind," said her father angrily. "He did mean to make you his heiress?"

"Henry is at Llanfeare now, and Henry will be his heir."

"Why has he changed? Nothing can be more unjust than to make a promise in such a matter and then to break it."

"Who says that he made a promise? You have never heard anything of the kind from me. Papa, I would so much rather not talk about Llanfeare. Ever since I have known him, Uncle Indefer has been all love to me. I would not allow a thought of mine to be polluted by ingratitude towards him. Whatever he has done, he has done because he has thought it to be the best. Perhaps I ought to tell you that he has made some charge on the property on my behalf, which will prevent my being a burden upon you."

A week or ten days after this, when she had been nearly a fortnight at Hereford, she was told that William Owen was coming in to drink tea. This communication was made to her by her stepmother, in that serious tone which is always intended to convey a matter of importance. Had any other minor canon or any other gentleman been coming to tea, the fact would have been announced in a different manner.

"I shall be delighted to see him," said Isabel, suppressing with her usual fortitude any slightest symptom of emotion.

"I hope you will, my dear. I am sure he is very anxious to see you."

Then Mr. Owen came and drank his tea in the midst of the family. Isabel could perceive that he was somewhat confused,—not quite able to talk in his usual tone, and that he was especially anxious as to his manner towards her. She took her part in the conversation as though there were nothing peculiar in the

meeting. She spoke of Llanfeare, of her uncle's failing health, and of her cousin's visit, taking care to indicate by some apparently chance word, that Henry was received there as the heir. She played her part well, evincing no sign of special feeling; but her ear was awake to the slightest tone in his voice after he had received the information she had given him. She knew that his voice was altered, but she did not read the alteration altogether aright.

"I shall call in the morning," he said, as he gave her his hand at parting. There was no pressure of the hand, but still he had addressed himself especially to her.

Why should he come in the morning? She had made up her mind, at the spur of the moment, that the news which he had heard had settled that matter for ever. But if so, why should he come in the morning? Then she felt, as she sat alone in her room, that she had done him a foul injustice in that spur of the

moment. It must be that she had done him an injustice, or he would not have said that he would come. But if he could be generous, so could she. She had refused him when she believed herself to be the heiress of Llanfeare, and she certainly would not accept him now.

On the next morning about eleven o'clock he came. She had become aware that it was the intention of all the family that she should see him alone, and she made no struggle against that intention. As such intention existed, the interview must of course take place, and as well now as later. There was no confidence on the matter between herself and her stepmother,—no special confidence between even herself and her half-sisters. But she was aware that they all supposed that Mr. Owen was to come there on that morning for the sake of renewing his offer to her. It was soon done when he had come.

"Isabel," he said, "I have brought with

me that letter which you wrote to me. Will you take it back again?" And he held it out in his hand.

"Nay; why should I take back my own letter?" she answered, smiling.

"Because I hope,—I do not say I trust,—but I hope that I may receive an altered answer."

"Why should you hope so?" she asked, foolishly enough.

"Because I love you so dearly. Let me say something very plainly. If it be a long story, forgive me because of its importance to myself. I did think that you were,—well, inclined to like me."

"Like you! I always liked you. I do like you."

"I hoped more. Perhaps I thought more. Nay, Isabel, do not interrupt me. When they told me that you were to be your uncle's heir, I knew that you ought not to marry me."

"Why not?"

"Well, I knew that it should not be so. I knew that your uncle would think so."

"Yes, he thought so."

"I knew that he would, and I accepted your answer as conveying his decision. I had not intended to ask the heiress of Llanfeare to be my wife."

"Why not? Why not?"

"I had not intended to ask the heiress of Llanfeare to be my wife," he said, repeating the words. "I learned last night that it was not to be so."

"No; it is not to be so."

"Then why should not Isabel Brodrick be the wife of William Owen, if she likes him,—if only she can bring herself to like him well enough?"

She could not say that she did not like him well enough. She could not force herself to tell such a lie! And yet there was her settled purpose still strong in her mind. Having

refused him when she believed herself to be rich, she could not bring herself to take him now that she was poor. She only shook her head mournfully.

"You cannot like me well enough for that?"

"It must not be so."

"Must not? Why must not?"

"It cannot be so."

"Then, Isabel, you must say that you do not love me."

"I need say nothing, Mr. Owen." Again she smiled as she spoke to him. "It is enough for me to say that it cannot be so. If I ask you not to press me further, I am sure that you will not do so."

"I shall press you further," he said, as he left her; "but I will leave you a week to think of it."

She took the week to think of it, and from day to day her mind would change as she thought of it. Why should she not

marry him, if thus they might both be happy? Why should she cling to a resolution made by her when she was in error as to the truth? She knew now, she was now quite certain, that when he had first come to her he had known nothing of her promised inheritance. He had come then simply because he loved her, and for that reason, and for that reason only, he had now come again. And yet,—and yet, there was her resolution! And there was the ground on which she had founded it! Though he might not remember it now, would he not remember hereafter that she had refused him when she was rich and accepted him when she was poor? Where then would be her martyrdom, where her glory, where her pride? Were she to do so, she would only do as would any other girl. Though she would not have been mean, she would seem to have been mean, and would so seem to his eyes. When the week was over she had told herself that she must be true to her resolution.

There had been something said about him in the family, but very little. The stepmother was indeed afraid of Isabel, though she had endeavoured to conquer her own fear by using authority; and her half-sisters, though they loved her, held her in awe. There was so little that was weak about her, so little that was self-indulgent, so little that was like the other girls around them! It was known that Mr. Owen was to come again on a certain day at a certain hour, and it was known also for what purpose he was to come; but no one had dared to ask a direct question as to the result of his coming.

He came, and on this occasion her firmness almost deserted her. When he entered the room he seemed to her to be bigger than before, and more like her master. As the idea that he was so fell upon her, she became aware that she loved him better than ever. She began to know that with such a look as he now wore he would be sure to con-

quer. She did not tell herself that she would yield, but thoughts flitted across her as to what might be the best manner of yielding.

"Isabel," he said, taking her by the hand, "Isabel, I have come again, as I told you that I would."

She could not take her hand from him, nor could she say a word to him in her accustomed manner. As he looked down upon her, she felt that she had already yielded, when suddenly the door was opened, and one of the girls hurried into the room.

"Isabel," said her sister, "here is a telegram for you, just come from Carmarthen."

Of course she opened it instantly with perturbed haste and quivering fingers. The telegram was as follows:—"Your uncle is very ill, very ill indeed, and wishes you to come back quite immediately." The telegram was not from her Cousin Henry, but from the doctor.

There was no time then either for giving love or for refusing it. The paper was handed to her lover to read, and then she rushed out of the room as though the train which was to carry her would start instantly.

"You will let me write to you by-and-by?" said Mr. Owen as she left him; but she made no answer to him as she rushed out of the room; nor would she make any answer to any of the others as they expressed either hope or consolation. When was the next train? When should she reach Carmarthen? When would she once more be at the old man's bedside? In the course of the afternoon she did leave Hereford, and at about ten o'clock that night she was at Carmarthen. Some one concerned had looked into this matter of the trains, and there at the station was a fly ready to take her to Llanfeare. Before eleven her uncle's hand was in hers, as she stood by his bedside.

Her Cousin Henry was in the room, and so was the housekeeper who had been with him constantly almost ever since she had left him. She had seen at once by the manner of the old servants as she entered the house, from the woeful face of the butler, and from the presence of the cook, who had lived in the family for the last twenty years, that something terrible was expected. It was not thus that she would have been received had not the danger been imminent.

"Dr. Powell says, Miss Isabel, that you are to be told that he will be here quite early in the morning."

This coming from the cook, told her that her uncle was expected to live that night, but that no more was expected.

"Uncle Indefer," she said, "how is it with you? Uncle Indefer, speak to me!" He moved his head a little upon the pillow; he turned his face somewhat towards hers; there was some slight return to the grasp of her

hand; there was a gleam of loving brightness left in his eye; but he could not then speak a word. When, after an hour, she left his room for a few minutes to get rid of her travelling clothes, and to prepare herself for watching by him through the night, the housekeeper, whom Isabel had known ever since she had been at Llanfeare, declared that in her opinion her uncle would never speak again.

"The doctor, Miss Isabel, thought so, when he left us."

She hurried down, and at once occupied the place which the old woman had filled for the last three days and nights. Before long she had banished the woman, so that to her might belong the luxury of doing anything, if aught could be done. That her cousin should be there was altogether unnecessary. If the old man could know any one at his deathbed, he certainly would not wish to see the heir whom he had chosen.

"You must go—you must indeed," said Isabel.

Then the cousin went, and so at last, with some persuasion, did the housekeeper.

She sat there hour after hour, with her hand lying gently upon his. When she would move it for a moment, though it was to moisten his lips, he would give some sign of impatience. For hours he lay in that way, till the early dawn of the summer morning broke into the room through the chink of the shutters. Then there came from him some sign of a stronger life, and at last, with a low muttered voice, indistinct, but not so indistinct but that the sounds were caught, he whispered a word or two.

"It is all right. It is done."

Soon afterwards she rang the bell violently, and when the nurse entered the room she declared that her old master was no more. When the doctor arrived at seven, having ridden out from Carmarthen, there was no-

thing for him further to do but to give a certificate as to the manner of death of Indefer Jones, Esq., late of Llanfeare, in the county of Carmarthen.

CHAPTER V.

PREPARING FOR THE FUNERAL.

Isabel, when she was left alone, felt that a terrible weight of duty was imposed on her. She seemed to be immediately encompassed by a double world of circumstances. There was that world of grief which was so natural, but which would yet be easy, could she only be allowed to sit down and weep. But it was explained to her that until after the funeral, and till the will should have been read, everything about Llanfeare must be done by her and in obedience to her orders. This necessity of action,—of action which in her present condition of mind did not seem clear to her,—was not at all easy.

The doctor was good to her, and gave her some instruction before he left her. "Shall I give the keys to my cousin?" she said to him. But even as she said this there was the doubt on her mind what those last words of her uncle had been intended to mean. Though her grief was very bitter, though her sorrow was quite sincere, she could not keep herself from thinking of those words. It was not that she was anxious to get the estate for herself. It was hardly in that way that the matter in these moments presented itself to her. Did the meaning of those words impose on her any duty? Would it be right that she should speak of them, or be silent? Ought she to suppose that they had any meaning, and if so, that they referred to the will?

"I think that you should keep the keys till after the will has been read," said the doctor.

"Even though he should ask for them?"

"Even though he should ask for them," said the doctor. "He will not press such a

request if you tell him that I say it ought to be so. If there be any difficulty, send for Mr. Apjohn."

Mr. Apjohn was the lawyer; but there had been quite lately some disagreement between her uncle and Mr. Apjohn, and this advice was not palatable to her.

"But," continued Dr. Powell, "you will not find any difficulty of that kind. The funeral had better be on Monday. And the will, I suppose, can be read afterwards. Mr. Apjohn will come out and read it. There can be no difficulty about that. I know that Mr. Apjohn's feelings are of the kindest towards your uncle and yourself."

Mr. Apjohn had taken upon himself to "scold" her uncle because of the altered will,—the will that had been altered in favour of Cousin Henry. So much the old man had said to Isabel himself. "If I think it proper, he has no right to scold me," the old man had said. The "scolding" had probably been

in the guise of that advice which a lawyer so often feels himself justified in giving.

Isabel thought that she had better keep those words to herself, at any rate for the present. She almost resolved that she would keep those words altogether to herself, unless other facts should come out which would explain their meaning and testify to their truth. She would say nothing of them in a way that would seem to imply that she had been led by them to conceive that she expected the property. She did certainly think that they alluded to the property. "It is all right. It is done." When her uncle had uttered these words, using the last effort of his mortal strength for the purpose, he no doubt was thinking of the property. He had meant to imply that he had done something to make his last decision "right" in her favour. She was, she thought, sure of so much. But then she bore in mind the condition of the old man's failing mind,—those wandering thoughts which would so

naturally endeavour to fix themselves upon her and upon the property in combination with each other. How probable was it that he would dream of something that he would fain do, and then dream that he had done it! And she knew, too, as well as the lawyer would know himself, that the words would go for nothing, though they had been spoken before a dozen witnesses. If a later will was there, the later will would speak for itself. If no later will was there, the words were empty breath.

But above all was she anxious that no one should think that she was desirous of the property,—that no one should suppose that she would be hurt by not having it. She was not desirous, and was not hurt. The matter was so important, and had so seriously burdened her uncle's mind, that she could not but feel the weight herself; but as to her own desires, they were limited to a wish that her uncle's will, whatever it might be, should be carried out. Not to have Llanfeare, not to have even a shil-

ling from her uncle's estate, would hurt her but little,—would hurt her heart not at all. But to know that it was thought by others that she was disappointed,—that would be a grievous burden to her! Therefore she spoke to Dr. Powell, and even to her cousin, as though the estate were doubtless now the property of the latter.

Henry Jones at this time,—during the days immediately following his uncle's death,—seemed to be so much awe-struck by his position, as to be incapable of action. To his Cousin Isabel he was almost servile in his obedience. With bated breath he did suggest that the keys should be surrendered to him, making his proposition simply on the ground that she would thus be saved from trouble; but when she told him that it was her duty to keep them till after the funeral, and that it would be her duty to act as mistress in the house till after that ceremony, he was cringing in his compliance.

"Whatever you think best, Isabel, shall be done. I would not interfere for a moment."

Then some time afterwards, on the following day, he assured her that whatever might be the nature of the will, she was to regard Llanfeare as her home as long as it would suit her to remain there.

"I shall go back to papa very soon," she had said, "as soon, indeed, as I can have my things packed up after the funeral. I have already written to papa to say so."

"Everything shall be just as you please," he replied; "only, pray, believe that if I can do anything for your accommodation it shall be done."

To this she made some formal answer of courtesy, not, it may be feared, very graciously. She did not believe in his civility; she did not think he was kind to her in heart, and she could not bring herself to make her manner false to her feelings. After that, during the days that remained before the funeral, very little was said

between them. Her dislike to him grew in bitterness, though she failed to explain even to herself the cause of her dislike. She did know that her uncle had been in truth as little disposed to love him as herself, and that knowledge seemed to justify her. Those last words had assured her at any rate of that, and though she was quite sure of her own conscience in regard to Llanfeare, though she was certain that she did not covet the possession of the domain, still she was unhappy to think that it should become his. If only for the tenants' sake and the servants, and the old house itself, there were a thousand pities in that. And then the belief would intrude itself upon her that her uncle in the last expression of his wishes had not intended his nephew to be his heir.

Then, in these days reports reached her which seemed to confirm her own belief. It had not been the habit of her life to talk intimately with the servants, even though at Llanfeare

there had been no other woman with whom she could talk intimately. There had been about her a sense of personal dignity which had made such freedom distasteful to herself, and had repressed it in them. But now the housekeeper had come to her with a story to which Isabel had found it impossible not to listen. It was reported about the place that the Squire had certainly executed another will a few days after Isabel had left Llanfeare.

"If so," said Isabel sternly, "it will be found when Mr. Apjohn comes to open the papers."

But the housekeeper did not seem satisfied with this. Though she believed that some document had been written, Mr. Apjohn had not been sent for, as had always been done on former similar occasions. The making of the Squire's will had been a thing always known and well understood at Llanfeare. Mr. Apjohn had been sent for on such occasions, and had returned after a day

or two, accompanied by two clerks. It was quite understood that the clerks were there to witness the will. The old butler, who would bring in the sherry and biscuits after the operation, was well acquainted with all the testamentary circumstances of the occasions. Nothing of that kind had occurred now; but old Joseph Cantor, who had been a tenant on the property for the last thirty years, and his son, Joseph Cantor the younger, had been called in, and it was supposed that they had performed the duty of witnessing the document. The housekeeper seemed to think that they, when interrogated, had declined to give any information on the subject. She herself had not seen them, but she had seen others of the tenants, and she was certain, she said, that Llanfeare generally believed that the old Squire had executed a will during the absence of his niece.

In answer to all this Isabel simply said that if a new will, which should turn out to be the

real will, had actually been made, it would be found among her uncle's papers. She knew well the manner in which those other wills had been tied and deposited in one of the drawers of her uncle's tables. She had been invited to read them all, and had understood from a thousand assurances that he had wished that nothing should be kept secret from her. The key of the very drawer was at this moment in her possession. There was nothing to hinder her from searching, should she wish to search. But she never touched the drawer. The key which locked it she placed in an envelope, and put it apart under another lock and key. Though she listened, though she could not but listen, to the old woman's narrative, yet she rebuked the narrator. "There should be no talking about such things," she said. "It had been," she said, "her uncle's intention to make his nephew the owner of Llanfeare, and she believed that he had done so. It was better that there should be no

conversation on the matter until the will had been read."

During these days she did not go beyond the precincts of the garden, and was careful not to encounter any of the tenants, even when they called at the house. Mr. Apjohn she did not see, nor Dr. Powell again, till the day of the funeral. The lawyer had written to her more than once, and had explained to her exactly the manner in which he intended to proceed. He, with Dr. Powell, would be at the house at eleven o'clock; the funeral would be over at half-past twelve; they would lunch at one, and immediately afterwards the will should be "looked for" and read. The words "looked for" were underscored in his letter, but no special explanation of the underscoring was given. He went on to say that the tenants would, as a matter of course, attend the funeral, and that he had taken upon himself to invite some few of those who had known the Squire most intimately, to be present at

the reading of the will. These he named, and among them were Joseph Cantor the elder, and Joseph Cantor the younger. It immediately occurred to Isabel that the son was not himself a tenant, and that no one else who was not a tenant was included in the list. From this she was sure that Mr. Apjohn had heard the story which the housekeeper had told her. During these days there was little or no intercourse between Isabel and her cousin. At dinner they met, but only at dinner, and even then almost nothing was said between them. What he did with himself during the day she did not even know. At Llanfeare there was a so-called book-room, a small apartment, placed between the drawing-room and the parlour, in which were kept the few hundred volumes which constituted the library of Llanfeare. It had not been much used by the late Squire, except that from time to time he would enter it for the sake of taking down with his own hands some volume of sermons from

the shelves. He himself had for years been accustomed to sit in the parlour, in which he ate his meals, and had hated the ceremony of moving even into the drawing-room. Isabel herself had a sitting-room of her own upstairs, and she, too, had never used the book-room. But here Cousin Henry had now placed himself, and here he remained through the whole day, though it was not believed of him that he was given to much reading. For his breakfast and his supper he went to the parlour alone. At dinner time Isabel came down. But through all the long hours of the day he remained among the books, never once leaving the house till the moment came for receiving Mr. Apjohn and Dr. Powell before the funeral. The housekeeper would say little words about him, wondering what he was doing in the book-room. To this Isabel would apparently pay no attention, simply remarking that it was natural that at such a time he should remain in seclusion.

"But he does get so very pale, Miss Isabel," said the housekeeper. "He wasn't white, not like that, when he come first to Llanfeare." To this Isabel made no reply; but she, too, had remarked how wan, how pallid, and how spiritless he had become.

On the Monday morning, when the men upstairs were at work on their ghastly duty, before the coming of the doctor and the lawyer, she went down to him, to tell him something of the programme for the day. Hitherto he had simply been informed that on that morning the body would be buried under the walls of the old parish church, and that after the funeral the will would be read. Entering the room somewhat suddenly she found him seated, vacant, in a chair, with an open book indeed on the table near him, but so placed that she was sure that he had not been occupied with it. There he was, looking apparently at the bookshelves, and when she entered the room he

jumped up to greet her with an air of evident surprise.

"Mr. Apjohn and Dr. Powell will be here at eleven," she said.

"Oh, ah; yes," he replied.

"I thought I would tell you, that you might be ready."

"Yes; that is very kind. But I am ready. The men came in just now, and put the band on my hat, and laid my gloves there. You will not go, of course?"

"Yes; I shall follow the body. I do not see why I should not go as well as you. A woman may be strong enough at any rate for that. Then they will come back to lunch."

"Oh, indeed; I did not know that there would be a lunch."

"Yes; Dr. Powell says that it will be proper. I shall not be there, but you, of course, will be present to take the head of the table."

"If you wish it."

"Of course; it would be proper. There

must be some one to seem at any rate to entertain them. When that is over Mr. Apjohn will find the will, and will read it. Richard will lay the lunch here, so that you may go at once into the parlour, where the will will be read. They tell me that I am to be there. I shall do as they bid me, though it will be a sore trouble to me. Dr. Powell will be there, and some of the tenants. Mr. Apjohn has thought it right to ask them, and therefore I tell you. Those who will be present are as follows;—John Griffith, of Coed; William Griffith, who has the home farm; Mr. Mortimer Green, of Kidwelly; Samuel Jones, of Llanfeare Grange; and the two Cantors, Joseph Cantor the father, and Joseph the son. I don't know whether you know them by appearance as yet."

"Yes," said he, "I know them." His face was almost sepulchral as he answered her, and as she looked at him she perceived that a slight quiver came upon his lips as she pro-

nounced with peculiar clearness the two last names on the list.

"I thought it best to tell you all this," she added. "If I find it possible, I shall go to Hereford on Wednesday. Most of my things are already packed. It may be that something may occur to stop me, but if it is possible I shall go on Wednesday."

CHAPTER VI.

MR. APJOHN'S EXPLANATION.

THE reader need not be detained with any elaborate account of the funeral. Every tenant and every labourer about the place was there; as also were many of the people from Carmarthen. Llanfeare Church, which stands on a point of a little river just as it runs into a creek of the sea, is not more than four miles distant from the town; but such was the respect in which the old squire was held that a large crowd was present as the body was lowered into the vault. Then the lunch followed, just as Isabel had said. There was Cousin Henry, and there were the doctor and the lawyer, and there were the tenants who had

been specially honoured by invitation, and there was Joseph Cantor the younger. The viands were eaten freely, though the occasion was not a happy one. Appetites are good even amidst grief, and the farmers of Llanfeare took their victuals and their wine in funereal silence, but not without enjoyment. Mr. Apjohn and Dr. Powell also were hungry, and being accustomed, perhaps, to such entertainments, did not allow the good things prepared to go waste. But Cousin Henry, though he made an attempt, could not swallow a morsel. He took a glass of wine, and then a second, helping himself from the bottle as it stood near at hand; but he ate nothing, and spoke hardly a word. At first he made some attempt, but his voice seemed to fail him. Not one of the farmers addressed a syllable to him. He had before the funeral taken each of them by the hand, but even then they had not spoken to him. They were rough of manner, little able to conceal their feelings; and he

understood well from their bearing that he was odious to them. Now as he sat at table with them, he determined that as soon as this matter should be settled he would take himself away from Llanfeare, even though Llanfeare should belong to him. While they were at the table both the lawyer and the doctor said a word to him, making a struggle to be courteous, but after the first struggle the attempt ceased also with them. The silence of the man, and even the pallor of his face, might be supposed to be excused by the nature of the occasion.

"Now," said Mr. Apjohn, rising from the table when the eating and drinking had ceased, "I think we might as well go into the next room. Miss Brodrick, who has consented to be present, will probably be waiting for us."

Then they passed through the hall into the parlour in a long string, Mr. Apjohn leading the way, followed by Cousin Henry. There

they found Isabel sitting with the housekeeper bedside her. She shook hands in silence with the attorney, the doctor, and all the tenants, and then, as she took her seat, she spoke a word to Mr. Apjohn. "As I have felt it hard to be alone, I have asked Mrs. Griffith to remain with me. I hope it is not improper?"

"There can be no reason on earth," said Mr. Apjohn, "why Mrs. Griffith should not hear the will of her master, who respected her so thoroughly." Mrs. Griffith bobbed a curtsey in return for this civility, and then sat down, intently interested in the coming ceremony.

Mr. Apjohn took from his pocket the envelope containing the key, and, opening the little packet very slowly, very slowly opened the drawer, and took out from it a bundle of papers tied with red tape. This he undid, and then, sitting with the bundle loosened before him, he examined the document lying at the top. Then, slowly spreading them out,

as though pausing over every operation with premeditated delay, he held in his hand that which he had at first taken; but he was in truth thinking of the words which he would have to use at the present moment. He had expected, but had expected with some doubt, that another document would have been found there. Close at his right hand sat Dr. Powell. Round the room, in distant chairs, were ranged the six farmers, each with his hat in hand between his knees. On a sofa opposite were Isabel and the housekeeper. Cousin Henry sat alone, not very far from the end of the sofa, almost in the middle of the room. As the operation went on, one of his hands quivered so much that he endeavoured to hold it with the other to keep it from shaking. It was impossible that any one there should not observe his trepidation and too evident discomfort.

The document lying at the top of the bundle was opened out very slowly by the

attorney, who smoothed it down with his hand preparatory to reading it. Then he looked at the date to assure himself that it was the last will which he himself had drawn. He knew it well, and was cognizant with its every legal quiddity. He could judiciously have explained every clause of it without reading a word, and might probably have to do so before the occasion was over; but he delayed, looking down upon it and still smoothing it, evidently taking another minute or two to collect his thoughts. This will now under his hand was very objectionable to him, having been made altogether in opposition to his own advice, and having thus created that "scolding" of which the Squire had complained to Isabel. This will bequeathed the whole of the property to Cousin Henry. It did also affect to leave a certain sum of money to Isabel, but the sum of money had been left simply as a sum of money, and not as a charge on the property. Now, within the last few days, Mr. Apjohn

had learnt that there were no funds remaining for the payment of such a legacy. The will, therefore, was to him thoroughly distasteful. Should that will in truth be found to be the last will and testament of the old Squire, then it would be his duty to declare that the estate and everything upon it belonged to Cousin Henry, and that there would be, as he feared, no source from which any considerable part of the money nominally left to Miss Brodrick could be defrayed. To his thinking nothing could be more cruel, nothing more unjust, than this.

He had heard tidings which would make it his duty to question the authenticity of this will which was now under his hand; and now had come the moment in which he must explain all this.

"The document which I hold here," he said, "purports to be the last will of our old friend. Every will does that as a matter of course. But then there may always be

another and a later will." Here he paused, and looked round the room at the faces of the farmers.

"So there be," said Joseph Cantor the younger.

"Hold your tongue, Joe, till you be asked," said the father.

At this little interruption all the other farmers turned their hats in their hands. Cousin Henry gazed round at them, but said never a word. The lawyer looked into the heir's face, and saw the great beads of sweat standing on his brow.

"You hear what young Mr. Cantor has said," continued the lawyer. "I am glad that he interrupted me, because it will make my task easier."

"There now, feyther!" said the young man triumphantly.

"You hold your tongue, Joe, till you be asked, or I'll lend ye a cuff."

"Now I must explain," continued Mr.

Apjohn, "what passed between me and my dear old friend when I received instructions from him in this room as to this document which is now before me. You will excuse me, Mr. Jones,"—this he said addressing himself especially to Cousin Henry—"if I say that I did not like this new purpose on the Squire's part. He was proposing an altogether new arrangement as to the disposition of his property; and though there could be no doubt, not a shadow of doubt, as to the sufficiency of his mental powers for the object in view, still I did not think it well that an old man in feeble health should change a purpose to which he had come in his maturer years, after very long deliberation, and on a matter of such vital moment. I expressed my opinion strongly, and he explained his reasons. He told me that he thought it right to keep the property in the direct line of his family. I endeavoured to explain to him that this might be sufficiently

done though the property were left to a lady, if the lady were required to take the name, and to confer the name on her husband, should she afterwards marry. You will probably all understand the circumstances."

"We understand them all," said John Griffith, of Coed, who was supposed to be the tenant of most importance on the property.

"Well, then, I urged my ideas perhaps too strongly. I am bound to say that I felt them very strongly. Mr. Indefer Jones remarked that it was not my business to lecture him on a matter in which his conscience was concerned. In this he was undoubtedly right; but still I thought I had done no more than my duty, and could only be sorry that he was angry with me. I can assure you that I never for a moment entertained a feeling of anger against him. He was altogether in his right, and was actuated simply by a sense of duty."

"We be quite sure of that," said Samuel Jones, from "The Grange," an old farmer, who was supposed to be a far-away cousin of the family.

"I have said all this," continued the lawyer, "to explain why it might be probable that Mr. Jones should not have sent for me, if, in his last days, he felt himself called on by duty to alter yet once again the decision to which he had come. You can understand that if he determined in his illness to make yet another will—"

"Which he did," said the younger Cantor, interrupting him.

"Exactly; we will come to that directly."

"Joe, ye shall be made to sit out in the kitchen; ye shall," said Cantor the father.

"You can understand, I say, that he might not like to see me again upon the subject. In such case he would have come back to the opinion which I had advocated; and, though no man in his strong health would have been

more ready to acknowledge an error than Indefer Jones, of Llanfeare, we all know that with failing strength comes failing courage. I think that it must have been so with him, and that for this reason he did not avail himself of my services. If there be such another will—"

"There be!" said the irrepressible Joe Cantor the younger. Upon this his father only looked at him. "Our names is to it," continued Joe.

"We cannot say that for certain, Mr. Cantor," said the lawyer. "The old Squire may have made another will, as you say, and may have destroyed it. We must have the will before we can use it. If he left such a will, it will be found among his papers. I have turned over nothing as yet; but as it was here in this drawer and tied in this bundle that Mr. Jones was accustomed to keep his will,—as the last will which I made is here, as I expected to find it, together with those which he

had made before and which he seems never to have wished to destroy, I have had to explain all this to you. It is, I suppose, true, Mr. Cantor, that you and your son were called upon by the Squire to witness his signature to a document which he purported to be a will on Monday the 15th of July?"

Then Joseph Cantor the father told all the circumstances as they had occurred. When Mr. Henry Jones had been about a fortnight at Llanfeare, and when Miss Isabel had been gone a week, he, Cantor, had happened to come up to see the Squire, as it was his custom to do at least once a week. Then the Squire had told him that his services and those also of his son were needed for the witnessing of a deed. Mr. Jones had gone on to explain that this deed was to be his last will. The old farmer, it seemed, had suggested to his landlord that Mr. Apjohn should be employed. The Squire then declared that this would be unnecessary; that he himself had copied a

former will exactly, and compared it word for word, and reproduced it with no other alteration than that of the date. All that was wanted would be his signature, efficiently witnessed by two persons who should both be present together with the testator. Then the document had been signed by the Squire, and after that by the farmer and his son. It had been written, said Joseph Cantor, not on long, broad paper such as that which had been used for the will now lying on the table before the lawyer, but on a sheet of square paper such as was now found in the Squire's desk. He, Cantor, had not read a word of what had there been set down, but he had been enabled to see that it was written in that peculiarly accurate and laborious handwriting which the Squire was known to use, but not more frequently than he could help.

Thus the story was told,—at least, all that there was to tell as yet. The drawer was opened and ransacked, as were also the other

drawers belonging to the table. Then a regular search was made by the attorney, accompanied by the doctor, the butler, and the housemaid, and continued through the whole afternoon,—in vain. The farmers were dismissed as soon as the explanation had been given as above described. During the remainder of the day Cousin Henry occupied a chair in the parlour, looking on as the search was continued. He offered no help, which was natural enough; nor did he make any remark as to the work in hand, which was, perhaps, also natural. The matter was to him one of such preponderating moment that he could hardly be expected to speak of it. Was he to have Llanfeare and all that belonged to it, or was he to have nothing? And then, though no accusation was made against him, though no one had insinuated that he had been to blame in the matter, still there was apparent among them all a strong feeling against him. Who had made away with this will, as to the exist-

ence of which at one time there was no doubt? Of course the idea was present to his mind that they must think that he had done so. In such circumstances it was not singular that he should say nothing and do nothing.

Late in the evening Mr. Apjohn, just before he left the house, asked Cousin Henry a question, and received an answer.

"Mrs. Griffiths tells me, Mr. Jones, that you were closeted with your uncle for about an hour immediately after the Cantors had left him on that Tuesday;—just after the signatures had been written. Was it so?"

Again the drops of sweat came out and stood thick upon his forehead. But this Mr. Apjohn could understand without making an accusation against the man, even in his heart. The unexpressed suspicion was so heavy that a man might well sweat under the burden of it! He paused a moment, and tried to look as though he were thinking. "Yes," said he; "I think I was with my uncle on that morning."

"And you knew that the Cantors had been with him?"

"Not that I remember. I think I did know that somebody had been there. Yes, I did know it. I had seen their hats in the hall."

"Did he say anything about them?"

"Not that I remember."

"Of what was he talking? Can you tell me? I rather fancy that he did not talk much to you."

"I think it was then that he told me the names of all the tenants. He used to scold me because I did not understand the nature of their leases."

"Did he scold you then?"

"I think so. He always scolded me. He did not like me. I used to think that I would go away and leave him. I wish that I had never come to Llanfeare. I do;—I do."

There seemed to be a touch of truth about this which almost softened Mr. Apjohn's heart to the poor wretch. "Would you mind

answering one more question, Mr. Jones?" he said. "Did he tell you that he had made another will?"

"No."

"Nor that he intended to do so?"

"No."

"He never spoke to you about another will,—a further will, that should again bestow the estate on your cousin?"

"No," said Cousin Henry, with the perspiration still on his brow.

Now it seemed to Mr. Apjohn certain that, had the old man made such a change in his purpose, he would have informed his nephew of the fact.

CHAPTER VII.

LOOKING FOR THE WILL.

THE search was carried on up to nine o'clock that evening, and then Mr. Apjohn returned to Carmarthen, explaining that he would send out two men to continue the work on the Tuesday, and that he would come out again on the Wednesday to read whatever might then be regarded as the old Squire's will,—the last prepared document if it could be found, and the former one should the search have been unsuccessful. "Of course," said he, in the presence of the two cousins, "my reading the document will give it no force. Of those found, the last in date will be good—until one later be found. It will be well, however, that some steps should

be taken, and nothing can be done till the will has been read." Then he took his leave and went back to Carmarthen.

Isabel had not shown herself during the whole of the afternoon. When Mr. Apjohn's explanation had been given, and the search commenced, she retired and went to her own room. It was impossible for her to take a part in the work that was being done, and almost equally impossible for her to remain without seeming to take too lively an interest in the proceeding. Every point of the affair was clear to her imagination. It could not now be doubted by her that her uncle, doubly actuated by the presence of the man he disliked and the absence of her whom he so dearly loved, had found himself driven to revoke the decision to which he had been brought. As she put it to herself, his love had got the better of his conscience during the weakness of his latter days. It was a pity,—a pity that it should have been so! It was to be regretted that there should

have been no one near him to comfort him in the misery which had produced such a lamentable result. A will, she thought, should be the outcome of a man's strength, and not of his weakness. Having obeyed his conscience, he should have clung to his conscience. But all that could not affect what had been done. It seemed to be certain to her that this other will had been made and executed. Even though it should have been irregularly executed so as to be null and void, still it must for a time at least have had an existence. Where was it now? Having these thoughts in her mind, it was impossible for her to go about the house among those who were searching. It was impossible for her to encounter the tremulous misery of her cousin. That he should shiver and shake and be covered with beads of perspiration during a period of such intense perturbation did not seem to her to be unnatural. It was not his fault that he had not been endowed with especial manliness. She disliked him in

his cowardice almost more than before; but she would not on that account allow herself to suspect him of a crime.

Mr. Apjohn, just before he went, had an interview with her in her own room.

"I cannot go without a word," he said, "but its only purport will be to tell you that I cannot as yet express any decided opinion in this matter."

"Do not suppose, Mr. Apjohn, that I am anxious for another will," she said.

"I am;—but that has nothing to do with it. That he did make a will, and have it witnessed by these two Cantors, is, I think, certain. That he should afterwards have destroyed the will without telling the witnesses, who would be sure hereafter to think and talk of what they had done, seems to be most unlike the thoughtful consideration of your uncle. But his weakness increased upon him very quickly just at that time. Dr. Powell thinks that he was certainly competent on that day to make a will,

but he thinks also he may have destroyed it a day or two afterwards when his mind was hardly strong enough to enable him to judge of what he was doing. If, at last, this new will shall not be forthcoming, I think we must be bound to interpret the matter in that way. I tell you this before I go in order that it may assist you perhaps a little in forming your own opinion." Then he went.

It was impossible but that she should bethink herself at that moment that she knew more than either Dr. Powell or Mr. Apjohn. The last expression of the old man's thoughts upon that or upon any matter had been made to herself. The last words that he had uttered had been whispered into her ears; "It is all right. It is done." Let the light of his failing intellect have been ever so dim, let his strength have faded from him ever so completely, he would not have whispered these words had he himself destroyed that last document. Mr. Apjohn had spoken of the opinion which she

was to form, and she felt how impossible to her it would be not to have an opinion in the matter. She could not keep her mind vacant even if she would. Mr. Apjohn had said that, if the will were not found, he should think that the Squire had in his weakness again changed his mind and destroyed it. She was sure that this was not so. She, and she alone, had heard those last words. Was it or was it not her duty to tell Mr. Apjohn that such words had been uttered? Had they referred to the interest of any one but herself, of course it would have been her duty. But now,—now she doubted. She did not choose to seem even to put forth a claim on her own account. And of what use would be any revelation as to the uttering of these words? They would be accepted in no court of law as evidence in one direction or another. Upon the whole, she thought she would keep her peace regarding them, even to Mr. Apjohn. If it was to be that her cousin should live there as squire and

owner of Llanfeare, why should she seek to damage his character by calling in question the will under which he would inherit the property? Thus she determined that she would speak of her uncle's last words to no one.

But what must be her opinion as to the whole transaction? At the present moment she felt herself bound to think that this missing document would be found. That to her seemed to be the only solution which would not be terrible to contemplate. That other solution,—of the destruction of the will by her uncle's own hands,—she altogether repudiated. If it were not found, then——! What then? Would it not then be evident that some fraud was being perpetrated? And if so, by whom? As these thoughts forced themselves upon her mind, she could not but think of that pallid face, those shaking hands, and the great drops of sweat which from time to time had forced themselves on to the man's brow. It was

natural that he should suffer. It was natural that he should be perturbed under the consciousness of the hostile feeling of all those around him. But yet there had hardly been occasion for all those signs of fear which she had found it impossible not to notice as she had sat there in the parlour while Mr. Apjohn was explaining the circumstances of the two wills. Would an innocent man have trembled like that because the circumstances around him were difficult? Could anything but guilt have betrayed itself by such emotions? And then, had the will in truth been made away with by human hands, what other hands could have done it? Who else was interested? Who else was there at Llanfeare not interested in the preservation of a will which would have left the property to her? She did not begrudge him the estate. She had acknowledged the strength of the reasons which had induced the Squire to name him as heir; but she declared to herself that, if that latter

document were not found, a deed of hideous darkness would have been perpetrated by him. With these thoughts disturbing her breast she lay awake during the long hours of the night.

When Mr. Apjohn had taken his departure, and the servants had gone to their beds, the butler having barred and double-barred the door after his usual manner, Cousin Henry still sat alone in the book-room. After answering those questions from Mr. Apjohn, he had spoken to no one, but still sat alone with a single candle burning on the table by his elbow. The butler had gone to him twice, asking him whether he wanted anything, and suggesting to him that he had better go to his bed. But the heir, if he was the heir, had only resented the intrusion, desiring that he might be left alone. Then he was left alone, and there he sat.

His mind at this moment was tormented grievously within him. There was a some-

thing which he might do, and a something which he might not do, if he could only make up his mind. "Honesty is the best policy!" "Honesty is the best policy!" He repeated the well-known words to himself a thousand times, without, however, moving his lips or forming a sound. There he sat, thinking it all out, trying to think it out. There he sat, still trembling, still in an agony, for hour after hour. At one time he had fully resolved to do that by which he would have proved to himself his conviction that honesty is the best policy, and then he sat doubting again—declaring to himself that honesty itself did not require him to do this meditated deed. "Let them find it," he said to himself at last, aloud. "Let them find it. It is their business: not mine." But still he sat looking up at the row of books opposite to him.

When it was considerably after midnight, he got up from his chair and began to walk the room. As he did so, he wiped his brow con-

tinually as though he were hot with the exertion, but keeping his eye still fixed upon the books. He was urging himself, pressing upon himself the expression of that honesty. Then at last he rushed at one of the shelves, and, picking out a volume of Jeremy Taylor's works, threw it upon the table. It was the volume on which the old Squire had been engaged when he read the last sermon which was to prepare him for a flight to a better world. He opened the book, and there between the leaves was the last will and testament which his uncle had executed.

At that moment he heard a step in the hall and a hand on the door, and as he did so with quick eager motion he hid the document under the book.

"It is near two o'clock, Mr. Henry," said the butler. "What are you doing up so late?"

"I am only reading," said the heir.

"It is very late to be reading. You had

better go to bed. He never liked people to be a-reading at these contrairy hours. He liked folk to be all a-bed."

The use of a dead man's authority, employed against him by one who was, so to say, his own servant, struck even him as absurd and improper. He felt that he must assert himself unless he meant to sink lower and lower in the estimation of all those around him. "I shall stay just as late as I please," he said. "Go away, and do not disturb me any more."

"His will ought to be obeyed, and he not twenty-four hours under the ground," said the butler.

"I should have stayed up just as long as I had pleased even had he been here," said Cousin Henry. Then the man with a murmur took his departure and closed the door after him.

For some minutes Cousin Henry sat perfectly motionless, and then he got up very softly, very silently, and tried the door. It

was closed, and it was the only door leading into the room. And the windows were barred with shutters. He looked round and satisfied himself that certainly no other eye was there but his own. Then he took the document up from its hiding-place, placed it again exactly between the leaves which had before enclosed it, and carefully restored the book to its place on the shelf.

He had not hidden the will. He had not thus kept it away from the eyes of all those concerned. He had opened no drawer. He had extracted nothing, had concealed nothing. He had merely carried the book from his uncle's table where he had found it, and, in restoring it to its place on the shelves, had found the paper which it contained. So he told himself now, and so he had told himself a thousand times. Was it his duty to produce the evidence of a gross injustice against himself? Who could doubt the injustice who knew that he had been

summoned thither from London to take his place at Llanfeare as heir to the property? Would not the ill done against him be much greater than any he would do were he to leave the paper there where he had chanced to find it?

In no moment had it seemed to him that he himself had sinned in the matter, till Mr. Apjohn had asked him whether his uncle had told him of this new will. Then he had lied. His uncle had told him of his intention before the will was executed, and had told him again, when the Cantors had gone, that the thing was done. The old man had expressed a thousand regrets, but the young one had remained impassive, sullen, crushed with a feeling of the injury down to him, but still silent. He had not dared to remonstrate, and had found himself unable to complain of the injustice.

There it was in his power. He was quite awake to the strength of his own position,—

but also to its weakness. Should he resolve to leave the document enclosed within the cover of the book, no one could accuse him of dishonesty. He had not placed it there. He had not hidden it. He had done nothing. The confusion occasioned by the absence of the will would have been due to the carelessness of a worn-out old man who had reached the time of life in which he was unfit to execute such a deed. It seemed to him that all justice, all honesty, all sense of right and wrong, would be best served by the everlasting concealment of such a document. Why should he tell of its hiding-place? Let them who wanted it search for it, and find it if they could. Was he not doing much in the cause of honesty in that he did not destroy it, as would be so easy for him?

But, if left there, would it not certainly be found? Though it should remain week after week, month after month,—even should it remain year after year, would it not certainly

be found at last, and brought out to prove that Llanfeare was not his own? Of what use to him would be the property,—of what service;—how would it contribute to his happiness or his welfare, knowing, as he would know, that a casual accident, almost sure to happen sooner or later, might rob him of it for ever? His imagination was strong enough to depict the misery to him which such a state of things would produce. How he would quiver when any stray visitor might enter the room! How terrified he would be at the chance assiduity of a housemaid! How should he act if the religious instincts of some future wife should teach her to follow out that reading which his uncle had cultivated?

He had more than once resolved that he would be mad were he to leave the document where he found it. He must make it known to those who were searching for it,—or he must destroy it. His common sense told him

that one alternative or the other must be chosen. He could certainly destroy it, and no one would be the wiser. He could reduce it, in the solitude of his chamber, into almost impalpable ashes, and then swallow them. He felt that, let suspicion come as it might into the minds of men, let Apjohn, and Powell, and the farmers,—let Isabel herself,—think what they might, no one would dare to accuse him of such a deed. Let them accuse him as they might, there would be no tittle of evidence against him.

But he could not do it. The more he thought of it, the more he had to acknowledge that he was incapable of executing such a deed. To burn the morsel of paper;—oh, how easy! But yet he knew that his hands would refuse to employ themselves on such a work. He had already given it up in despair; and, having told himself that it was impossible, had resolved to extricate the document and, calling Isabel up from her bed in the middle

of the night, to hand it over to her at once. It would have been easy to say he had opened one book after another, and it would, he thought, be a deed grand to do. Then he had been interrupted, and insulted by the butler, and in his anger he had determined that the paper should rest there yet another day.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE READING OF THE WILL.

On the whole of the next day the search was continued. In spite of his late watches, Cousin Henry rose up early, not looking at anything that was being done while the search was continued in other rooms, but still sitting, as he had heretofore sat, among the books. The two men whom Mr. Apjohn had sent from his office, together with the butler and Mrs. Griffith, began their work in the old man's bed-room, and then carried it on in the parlour. When they came to the book-room, as being the next in turn, Cousin Henry took his hat and went out into the garden. There, as he made short turns upon

the gravel path, he endeavoured to force himself away from the close vicinity of the window; but he could not do it. He could not go where he would have been unable to see what was being done. He feared,—he trembled in his fear,—lest they should come upon the guilty volume. And yet he assured himself again and again that he wished that they might find it. Would it not in every way be better for him that they should find it? He could not bring himself to destroy it, and surely, sooner or later, it would be found.

Every book was taken from its shelf, apparently with the object of looking into the vacant spaces behind them. Through the window he could see all that was done. As it happened, the compartment in which was the fatal shelf,—on which was the fatal volume,—was the last that they reached. No attempt was made to open the books one by one; but then this volume, with so thick

an enclosure to betray it, would certainly open of itself. He himself had gone to the place so often that certainly the enclosure would betray itself. Well, let it betray itself! No one could say that he had had guilty cognizance of its whereabouts! But yet he knew that he would have been unable to speak, would have gasped, and would surely have declared himself to be guilty by his awe-struck silence.

Three by three the books came down, and then were replaced. And now they were at the shelf! Why could he not go away? Why must he stand there fixed at the window? He had done nothing,—nothing, nothing; and yet he stood there trembling, immovable, with the perspiration running off his face, unable to keep his eyes for a moment from what they were doing! At last the very three came down, in the centre of which was the volume containing the will. There was a tree against which he leaned, unable to support himself,

as he looked into the room. The vacant place was searched, and then the three books were replaced! No attempt was made to examine the volumes. The men who did the work clearly did not know that these very volumes had been in constant use with the old Squire. They were replaced, and then the search, as far as that room was concerned, was over. When they were gone, Cousin Henry returned again to the room, and there he remained during the rest of the day. The search as it was carried on elsewhere had no interest for him.

Whatever harm might be done to others, whoever else might be injured, certainly no one was ill-treated as he had been ill-treated. It was thus he thought of it. Even should the will never be found, how cruel would be the injustice done to him! He had not asked to be made heir to the property! It was not his doing. He had been invited to come in order that he might be received

as the heir, and since he had come, every one about the place had misused him. The tenants had treated him with disdain; the very servants had been insolent; his Cousin Isabel, when he had offered to share everything with her, had declared that he was hateful to her; and his uncle himself had heaped insult upon injury, and had aggravated injustice with scorn.

"Yes; I had intended that you should be my heir, and have called you hither for that purpose. Now I find you to be so poor a creature that I have changed my mind." That in truth was what his uncle had said to him and had done for him. Who, after that, would expect him to go out of his way in search of special magnanimity? Let them find the will if they wanted it! Even though he should resolve himself to have nothing to do with the property, even though he should repudiate any will in his own favour, still he would

not tell them where this will might be found. Why should he help them in their difficulty?

Every carpet was taken up, every piece of furniture was moved, every trunk and box in the house was examined, but it occurred to no one that every book should be opened. It was still July, and the day was very long. From six in the morning till nine at night they were at work, and when the night came they declared that every spot about the place had been searched.

"I think, Miss, that the old Squire did destroy it. He was a little wandering at last." It was thus that Mrs. Griffith had expressed her opinion to Isabel.

Isabel was sure that it was not so, but said nothing in reply.

If she could only get away from Llanfeare and have done with it, she would be satisfied. Llanfeare had become odious to her and terrible! She would get away, and wash her

hands of it. And yet she was aware how sad would be her condition. Mr. Apjohn had already explained to her that the Squire had so managed his affairs as to have left no funds from which could be paid the legacy which had nominally been left to her. She had told her father when at Hereford that her uncle had taken such care of her that she would not become a burden upon him. Now it seemed that she would have to return home without a shilling of her own. For one so utterly penniless to think of marrying a man who had little but his moderate professional income would, she felt, be mean as well as wrong. There must be an end to everything between her and Mr. Owen. If her father could not support her, she must become a governess or, failing that, a housemaid. But even the poor-house would be better than Llanfeare, if Llanfeare were to be the property of Cousin Henry.

Mr. Apjohn had told her that she could

not now leave the place on the Wednesday as she had intended. On the Wednesday he again came to Llanfeare, and then she saw him before he proceeded to his business. It was his intention now to read the last will which had been found, and to explain to those who heard it that he proposed, as joint executor with Dr. Powell, to act upon that as the last will;—but still with a proviso that another will might possibly be forthcoming. Though he had in a measure quarrelled with the Squire over the making of that will, nevertheless, he had been appointed in it as the executor, such having been the case in the wills previously made. All this he explained to her up in her room, assenting to her objection to be again present when the will should be read.

"I could not do it," she said; "and of what use could it be, as I know everything that is in it? It would be too painful."

He, remembering the futile legacy which it

contained for herself, and the necessity which would be incumbent upon him to explain that there were no funds for paying it, did not again ask her to be present.

"I shall go to-morrow," she said.

Then he asked her whether she could not remain until the beginning of next week, urging objections to this final surrender of Llanfeare; but she was not to be turned from her purpose. "Llanfeare will have been surrendered," she said; "the house will be his to turn me out of if he pleases."

"He would not do that."

"He shall not have the chance. I could not hide it from you if I would. He and I do not love each other. Since he has been here I have kept away from him with disgust. He cannot but hate me, and I will not be a guest in his house. Besides, what can I do?"

"The will will not have been proved, you know."

"What difference will there be in that? It will be proved at once. Of course he will have the keys, and will be master of everything. There are the keys." As she said this she handed over to him various bunches. "You had better give them to him yourself when you have read the will, so that I need have nothing to say to him. There are some books of mine which my uncle gave me. Mrs. Griffith will pack them, and send them to me at Hereford,—unless he objects. Everything else belonging to me I can take with me. Perhaps you will tell them to send a fly out for me in time for the early train."

And so it was settled.

Then that will was read,—that will which we know not to have been the last will,—in the presence of Cousin Henry, of Dr. Powell, who had again come out with Mr. Apjohn, and of the farmers, who were collected as before.

It was a long, tedious document, in which

the testator set forth at length his reasons for the disposition which he made of the property. Having much considered the matter, he had thought the estate should descend to the male heir, even in default of a regular deed of entail. Therefore, although his love for his dearest niece, Isabel Brodrick, was undiminished, and his confidence in her as perfect as ever, still he had thought it right to leave the old family property to his nephew, Henry Jones. Then, with all due circumstances of description, the legacy was made in favour of his nephew. There were other legacies; a small sum of money to Mr. Apjohn himself, for the trouble imposed upon him as executor, a year's wages to each of his servants, and other matters of the kind. There was also left to Isabel that sum of four thousand pounds of which mention has been made. When the lawyer had completed the reading of the document, he declared that to the best of his knowledge no such money was

in existence. The testator had no doubt thought that legacies so made would be paid out of the property, whereas the property could be made subject to no such demand unless it had, by proper instrument to that effect, been charged with the amount.

"But," he said, "Mr. Henry Jones, when he comes into possession of the estate, will probably feel himself called upon to set that matter right, and to carry out his uncle's wishes."

Upon this Cousin Henry, who had not as yet spoken a word throughout the ceremony, was profuse in his promises. Should the estate become his, he would certainly see that his uncle's wishes were carried out in regard to his dear cousin. To this Mr. Apjohn listened, and then went on to explain what remained to be said. Though this will, which he had now read, would be acted upon as though it were the last will and testament of the deceased,—though, in default of that

for which futile search had been made, it certainly was what it purported to be,—still there existed in full force all those reasons which he had stated on the Monday for supposing that the late Squire had executed another. Here Joseph Cantor, junior, gave very strong symptoms of his inclination to reopen that controversy, but was stopped by the joint efforts of his father and the lawyer. If such a document should ever be found, then that would be the actual will, and not the one which he had now read. After that, when all due formalities had been performed, he took his leave, and went back to Carmarthen.

The keys were given up to Cousin Henry, and he found himself to be, in fact, the lord and master of the house, and the owner of everything within it. The butler, Mrs. Griffith, and the gardener gave him notice to quit. They would stay, if he wished it, for three months, but they did not think that they

could be happy in the house now that the old Squire was dead, and that Miss Isabel was going away. There certainly did not come to him at the present moment any of the pleasures of ownership. He would have been willing,—he thought that he would have been willing,—to abandon Llanfeare altogether, if only it could have been abandoned without any of the occurrences of the last month. He would have been pleased that there should have been no Llanfeare.

But as it was, he must make up his mind to something. He must hide the paper in some deeper hiding-place, or he must destroy it, or he must reveal it. He thought that he could have dropped the book containing the will into the sea, though he could not bring himself to burn the will itself. The book was now his own, and he might do what he liked with it. But it would be madness to leave the paper there!

Then again there came to him the idea that

it would be best for him, and for Isabel too, to divide the property. In one way it was his,—having become his without any fraudulent doing on his part. So he declared to himself. In another way it was hers,—though it could not become hers without some more than magnanimous interference on his part. To divide it would certainly be best. But there was no other way of dividing it but by a marriage. For any other division, such as separating the land or the rents, no excuse could be made, nor would any such separation touch the fatal paper which lay between the leaves of the book. Were she to consent to marry him, then he thought he might find courage to destroy the paper.

It was necessary that he should see her on that afternoon, if only that he might bid her adieu, and tell her that she should certainly have the money that had been left her. If it were possible he would say a word also about that other matter.

"You did not hear the will read," he said to her.

"No," she answered abruptly.

"But you have been told its contents?"

"I believe so."

"About the four thousand pounds?"

"There need be no question about the four thousand pounds. There is not a word to be said about it,—at any rate between you and me."

"I have come to tell you," said he,—not understanding her feeling in the least, and evidently showing by the altered tone of his voice that he thought that his communication would be received with favour,—"I have come to tell you that the legacy shall be paid in full. I will see to that myself as soon as I am able to raise a penny on the property."

"Pray do not trouble yourself, Cousin Henry."

"Oh, certainly I shall."

"Do not trouble yourself. You may be

sure of this, that on no earthly consideration would I take a penny from your hands."

"Why not?"

"We take presents from those whom we love and esteem, not from those we despise."

"Why should you despise me?" he asked.

"I will leave that to yourself to judge of; but be sure of this, that though I were starving I would take nothing from your hands."

Then she got up, and, retiring into the inner room, left him alone. It was clear to him then that he could not divide the property with her in the manner that he had suggested to himself.

CHAPTER IX.

ALONE AT LLANFEARE.

On the day after the reading of the will, Henry Indefer Jones, Esq., of Llanfeare, as he was now to be called, was left alone in his house, his cousin Isabel having taken her departure from the place in the manner proposed by her. And the lawyer was gone, and the doctor, and the tenants did not come near him, and the butler and the housekeeper kept out of his way, and there was probably no man in all South Wales more lonely and desolate than the new Squire of Llanfeare on that morning.

The cruelty of it, the injustice of it, the unprecedented hardness of it all! Such were

the ideas which presented themselves to him as hour after hour he sat in the book-room with his eyes fixed on the volume of Jeremy Taylor's sermons. He had done nothing wrong,—so he told himself,—had not even coveted anything that did not belong to him. It was in accordance with his uncle's expressed desire that he had come to Llanfeare, and been introduced to the tenants as their future landlord, and had taken upon himself the place of the heir. Then the old man had announced to him his change of mind; but had not announced it to others, had not declared his altered purpose to the world at Llanfeare, and had not at once sent him back to his London office. Had he done so, that would have been better. There would have been a gross injustice, but that would have been the end of it, and he would have gone back to his London work unhappy indeed, but with some possibility of life before him. Now it seemed as though any mode of

living would be impossible to him. While that fatal paper remained hidden in the fatal volume he could do nothing but sit there and guard it in solitude.

He knew well enough that it behoved him as a man to go out about the estate and the neighbourhood, and to show himself, and to take some part in the life around him, even though he might be miserable and a prey to terror whilst he was doing so. But he could not move from his seat till his mind had been made up as to his future action. He was still in fearful doubt. Through the whole of that first day he declared to himself that his resolution had not yet been made,—that he had not yet determined what it would be best that he should do. It was still open to him to say that at any moment he had just found the will. If he could bring himself to do so he might rush off to Carmarthen with the document in his pocket, and still appear before the lawyer as a man triumphant in his own

honesty, who at the first moment that it was possible had surrendered all that which was not legally his own, in spite of the foul usage to which he had been subjected. He might still assume the grand air of injured innocence, give back the property to the young woman who had insulted him, and return to his desk in London, leaving behind him in Carmarthenshire a character for magnanimity and honour. Such a line of conduct had charms in his eyes. He was quite alive to the delight of heaping coals of fire on his cousin's head. She had declared that she would receive nothing at his hands, because she despised him. After that there would be a sweetness, the savour of which was not lost upon his imagination, in forcing her to take all from his hands. And it would become known to all men that it was he who had found the will,—he who might have destroyed it without the slightest danger of discovery,—he who without peril might thus have made himself owner of Llanfeare. There would be a delight to him in the

character which he would thus achieve. But then she had scorned him! No bitterer scorn had ever fallen from the lips or flashed from the eyes of a woman. "We take presents from those we love, not from those we despise!" He had not resented the words at the moment; he had not dared to do so; but not the less had they entered upon his very soul,—not the less had he hated the woman who had dared so to reply to the generous offer which he had made her.

And then there was an idea present to him through it all that abstract justice, if abstract justice could be reached, would declare that the property should be his. The old man had made his will with all the due paraphernalia of will-making. There had been the lawyer and the witnesses brought by the lawyer; and, above all, there had been the declared reason of the will and its understood purpose. He had been sent for, and all Carmarthenshire had been made to understand why it was to be so. Then, in his sickness, the old

man had changed his mind through some fantastic feeling, and almost on his death-bed, with failing powers, in a condition probably altogether unfit for such a duty, had executed a document which the law might respect, but which true justice, if true justice could be invoked, would certainly repudiate. Could the will be abolished, no more than justice would be done. But, though the will were in his own power, it could not be abolished by his own hands.

As to that abolishing he was perfectly conscious of his own weakness. He could not take the will from its hiding-place and with his own hand thrust it into the flames. He had never as yet even suggested to himself that he would do so. His hair stood on end as he thought of the horrors attendant on such a deed as that. To be made to stand in the dock and be gazed at by the angry eyes of all the court, to be written of as the noted criminal of the day, to hear the verdict of guilty, and then

the sentence, and to be aware that he was to be shut up and secluded from all comforts throughout his life! And then, and then, the dread hereafter! For such a deed as that would there not be assured damnation? Although he told himself that justice demanded the destruction of the will, justice could not be achieved by his own hand after such fashion as that.

No; he could not himself destroy the document, though it should remain there for years to make his life a burden to him. As to that he had made up his mind, if to nothing else. Though there might be no peril as to this world,—though he might certainly do the deed without a chance of detection from human eyes,—though there would in truth be no prospect of that angry judge and ready jury and crushing sentence, yet he could not do it. There was something of a conscience within him. Were he to commit a felony, from the moment of the doing of the deed

the fear of eternal punishment would be heavy on his soul, only to be removed by confession and retribution,—and then by that trial with the judge, and the jury, and the sentence! He could not destroy the document. But if the book could get itself destroyed, what a blessing it would be! The book was his own, or would be in a few days, when the will should have been properly proved. But if he were to take away the book and sink it in a well, or throw it into the sea, or bury it deep beneath the earth, then it would surely reappear by one of those ever-recurring accidents which are always bringing deeds of darkness to the light. Were he to cast the book into the sea, tied with strings or cased in paper, and leaded, that it should surely sink, so that the will should not by untoward chance float out of it, the book tied and bound and leaded would certainly come up in evidence against him. Were he to move the

book, the vacant space would lead to suspicion. He would be safe only by leaving the book where it was, by giving no trace that he had ever been conscious of the contents of the book.

And yet, if the document were left there, the book would certainly divulge its dread secret at last. The day would come, might come, ah! so quickly, on which the document would be found, and he would be thrust out, penniless as far as any right to Llanfeare was concerned. Some maid-servant might find it; some religious inmate of his house who might come there in search of godly teaching! If he could only bring himself to do something at once,—to declare that it was there, so that he might avoid all these future miseries! But why had she told him that she despised him, and why had the old man treated him with such unexampled cruelty? So it went on with him for three or four days, during which he still kept his place among the books.

There would be great delight in possessing Llanfeare, if he could in very truth possess it. He would not live there. No; certainly not that. Every tenant about the place had shown him that he was despised. Their manner to him before the old Squire's death, their faces as they had sat there during the ceremonies of the will, and the fact that no one had been near him since the reading of the will, had shown him that. He had not dared to go to church during the Sunday; and though no one had spoken to him of his daily life, he felt that tales were being told of him. He was sure that Mrs. Griffiths had whispered about the place the fact of his constant residence in one room, and that those who heard it would begin to say among themselves that a practice so strange must be connected with the missing will. No, he would not willingly live at Llanfeare. But if he could let Llanfeare, were it but for a song, and enjoy the rents up in London, how pleasant would that be! But then, had ever any

man such a sword of Damocles to hang over his head by a single hair, as would be then hanging over his head were he to let Llanfeare or even to leave the house, while that book with its inclosure was there upon the shelves? It did seem to him, as he thought of it, that life would be impossible to him in any room but that as long as the will remained among the leaves of the volume.

Since the moment in which he had discovered the will he had felt the necessity of dealing with the officials of the office in London at which he had been employed. This was an establishment called the Sick and Healthy Life Assurance Company, in which he held some shares, and at which he was employed as a clerk. It would of course be necessary that he should either resign his place or go back to his duties. That the Squire of Llanfeare should be a clerk at the Sick and Healthy would be an anomaly. Could he really be in possession of his rents,

the Sick and Healthy would of course see no more of him; but were he to throw up his position and then to lose Llanfeare, how sad, how terrible, how cruel would be his fate! But yet something must be done. In these circumstances he wrote a letter to the manager, detailing all the circumstances with a near approach to the truth, keeping back only the one little circumstance that he himself was acquainted with the whereabouts of the missing will.

"It may turn up at any moment," he explained to the manager, "so that my position as owner of the property is altogether insecure. I feel this so thoroughly that were I forced at the present to choose between the two I should keep my clerkship in the office; but as the condition of things is so extraordinary, perhaps the directors will allow me six months in which to come to a decision, during which I may hold my place, without, of course, drawing any salary."

Surely, he thought, he could decide on something before the six months should be over. Either he would have destroyed the will, or have sunk the book beneath the waves, or have resolved to do that magnanimous deed which it was still within his power to achieve. The only one thing not possible would be for him to leave Llanfeare and take himself up to the delights of London while the document was yet hidden within the volume.

"I suppose, sir, you don't know yet as to what your plans are going to be?" This was said by Mrs. Griffiths as soon as she made her way into the book-room after a somewhat imperious knocking at the door. Hitherto there had been but little communication between Cousin Henry and his servants since the death of the old Squire. Mrs. Griffiths had given him warning that she would leave his service, and he had somewhat angrily told her that she might go as soon as it pleased her. Since that she had

come to him once daily for his orders, and those orders had certainly been very simple. He had revelled in no luxuries of the table or the cellar since the keys of the house had been committed to his charge. She had been told to provide him with simple food, and with food she had provided him. The condition of his mind had been such that no appetite for the glories of a rich man's table had yet come to him. That accursed book on the opposite shelf had destroyed all his taste for both wine and meat.

"What do you want to know for?" he asked.

"Well, sir; it is customary for the housekeeper to know something, and if there is no mistress she can only go to the master. We always were very quiet here, but Miss Isabel used to tell me something of what was expected."

"I don't expect anything," said Cousin Henry.

"Is there anybody to come in my place?" she asked.

"What can that be to you? You can go when you please."

"The other servants want to go, too. Sally won't stay, nor yet Mrs. Bridgeman." Mrs. Bridgeman was the cook. "They say they don't like to live with a gentleman who never goes out of one room."

"What is it to them what room I live in? I suppose I may live in what room I please in my own house." This he said with an affectation of anger, feeling that he was bound to be indignant at such inquiries from his own servant, but with more of fear than wrath in his mind. So they had in truth already begun to inquire why it was that he sat there watching the books!

"Just so, Mr. Jones. Of course you can live anywhere you like,—in your own house."

There was an emphasis on the last words which was no doubt intended to be imper-

tinent. Every one around was impertinent to him.

"But so can they, sir,—not in their own house. They can look for situations, and I thought it my duty just to tell you, because you wouldn't like to find yourself all alone here, by yourself like."

"Why is it that everybody turns against me?" he asked suddenly, almost bursting into tears.

At this her woman's heart was a little softened, though she did despise him thoroughly. "I don't know about turning, Mr. Jones, but they have been used to such different ways."

"Don't they get enough to eat?"

"Yes, sir; there's enough to eat, no doubt. I don't know as you have interfered about that; not but what as master you might. It isn't the victuals."

"What is it, Mrs. Griffiths? Why do they want to go away?"

"Well, it is chiefly because of your sitting here alone,—never moving, never having your hat on your head, sir. Of course a gentleman can do as he pleases in his own house. There is nothing to make him go out, not even to see his own tenants, nor his own farm, nor nothing else. He's his own master, sir, in course;—but it is mysterious. There is nothing goes against them sort of people,"—meaning the servants inferior to herself,—"like mysteries."

Then they already felt that there was a mystery! Oh! what a fool he had been to shut himself up and eat his food there! Of course they would know that this mystery must have some reference to the will. Thus they would so far have traced the truth as to have learnt that the will had a mystery, and that the mystery was located in that room!

There is a pleasant game, requiring much sagacity, in which, by a few answers, one is led closer and closer to a hidden word, till one is

enabled to touch it. And as with such a word, so it was with his secret. He must be careful that no eye should once see that his face was turned towards the shelf. At this very moment he shifted his position so as not to look at the shelf, and then thought that she would have observed the movement, and divined the cause.

"Anyways, they begs to say respectful that they wishes you to take a month's warning. As for me, I wouldn't go to inconvenience my old master's heir. I'll stay till you suits yourself, Mr. Jones; but the old place isn't to me now what it was."

"Very well, Mrs. Griffiths," said Cousin Henry, trying to fix his eyes upon an open book in his hands.

CHAPTER X.

COUSIN HENRY DREAMS A DREAM.

From what had passed with Mrs. Griffiths, it was clear to Cousin Henry that he must go out of the house and be seen about the place. The woman had been right in saying that his seclusion was mysterious. It was peculiarly imperative upon him to avoid all appearance of mystery. He ought to have been aware of this before. He ought to have thought of it, and not to have required to be reminded by a rebuke from the housekeeper. He could now only amend the fault for the future, and endeavour to live down the mystery which had been created. Almost as soon as Mrs. Griffiths had left him, he prepared to move. But then he be-

thought himself that he must not seem to have obeyed, quite at the moment, the injunctions of his own servant; so he re-seated himself, resolved to postpone for a day or two his intention of calling upon one of the tenants. He re-seated himself, but turned his back to the shelf, lest the aspect of his countenance should be watched through the window.

On the following morning he was relieved from his immediate difficulty by the arrival of a letter from Mr. Apjohn. It was necessary that a declaration as to the will should be made before a certain functionary at Carmarthen, and as the papers necessary for the occasion had been prepared in the lawyer's office, he was summoned into Carmarthen for the purpose. Immediately after that he would be put into full possession of the property. Mr. Apjohn also informed him that the deed had been prepared for charging the estate with four thousand pounds on behalf of his Cousin Isabel. By this he would bind himself to pay

her two hundred a year for the next two years, and at the end of that period to hand over to her the entire sum. Here was an excuse provided for him to leave the house and travel as far as Carmarthen. There were the horses and the carriage with which his uncle had been accustomed to be taken about the estate, and there was still the old coachman, who had been in the service for the last twenty years. So he gave his orders, and directed that the carriage should be ready soon after two, in order that he might keep the appointment made by the lawyer at three. The order was sent out to the stable through the butler, and as he gave it he felt how unable he was to assume the natural tone of a master to his servants.

"The carriage, sir!" said the butler, as though surprised. Then the owner of Llanfeare found himself compelled to explain to his own man that it was necessary that he should see the lawyer in Carmarthen.

Should he or should he not take the book

with him as he went? It was a large volume, and could not well be concealed in his pocket. He might no doubt take a book,—any book,—with him for his own recreation in the carriage; but, were he to do so, the special book which he had selected would be marked to the eyes of the servants. It required but little thought to tell him that the book must certainly be left in its place. He could have taken the will and kept it safe, and certainly unseen, in the pocket of his coat. But then, to take the will from its hiding-place, and to have it on his person, unless he did so for the purpose of instant and public revelation, would, as he thought, be in itself a felony. There would be the doing of a deed in the very act of abstracting the document; and his safety lay in the abstaining from any deed. What if a fit should come upon him, or he should fall and hurt himself and the paper be found in his possession? Then there would at once be the intervention of the police, and the cell,

and the angry voices of the crowd, and the scowling of the judge, and the quick sentence, and that dwelling among thieves and felons for the entire period of his accursed life! Then would that great command, "Thou shalt not steal," be sounding always in his ear! Then would self-condemnation be heavy upon him! Not to tell of the document, not to touch it, not to be responsible in any way for its position there on the shelf,—that was not to steal it. Hitherto the word "felon" had not come home to his soul. But were he to have it in his pocket, unless with that purpose of magnanimity of which he thought so often, then he would be a felon.

Soon after two he left the room, and at the moment was unable not to turn a rapid glance upon the book. There it was, safe in its place. How well he knew the appearance of the volume! On the back near the bottom was a small speck, a spot on the binding, which had been so far disfigured by some accident in use. This seemed

to his eyes to make it marked and separate among a thousand. To him it was almost wonderful that a stain so peculiar should not at once betray the volume to the eyes of all. But there it was, such as it was, and he left it amidst its perils. Should they pounce upon it the moment that he had left the room, they could not say that he was guilty because it contained the will.

He went to Carmarthen, and there his courage was subjected to a terrible trial. He was called upon to declare before the official that to the best of his belief the will, which was about to be proved, was the last will and testament of Indefer Jones. Had this been explained to him by the lawyer in his letter, he might probably have abstained from so damning a falsehood. There would have been time then for some resolution. Had Mr. Apjohn told him what it was that he was about to be called upon to perform, even then, before the necessity of performance was presented

to him, there would have been a moment for consideration, and he might have doubted. Had he hesitated in the presence of the lawyer, all would have been made known. But he was carried before the official not knowing that the lie was to be submitted to him, and before he could collect his thoughts the false declaration had been made!

"You understand, Mr. Jones," said the lawyer in the presence of the official, "that we still think that a further will may eventually be found?"

"I understand that," croaked the poor wretch.

"It is well that you should bear it in mind," said Mr. Apjohn severely;—"for your own sake, I mean."

There was nothing further spoken on the subject, and he was given to understand that Llanfeare was now in truth his own;—his own, whatever chance there might be that it should be wrested from him hereafter.

Then followed the business as to the charge upon the property which was to be made on behalf of Isabel. The deeds were prepared, and only required the signature of the new Squire.

"But she has refused to take a penny from me," said the Squire, hesitating with a pen in his hand. Let us give him his due by declaring that, much as he hated his cousin, he did not doubt as to bestowing the money upon her. As far as he was concerned, she was welcome to the four thousand pounds.

But the lawyer misinterpreted his client's manner. "I should think, Mr. Jones," he said, with still increased severity, "that you would have felt that under the peculiar circumstances you were bound to restore to your cousin money which was expended by your uncle under a misconception in purchasing land which will now be yours."

"What can I do if she will not take it?"

"Not take it? That is an absurdity. In a matter of such importance as this she will of course be guided by her father. It is not a matter requiring gratitude on her part. The money ought to be regarded as her own, and you will only be restoring to her what is in truth her own."

"I am quite willing. I have made no difficulty, Mr. Apjohn. I don't understand why you should speak to me in that way about it, as though I had hesitated about the money." Nevertheless, the lawyer maintained the severe look, and there was still the severe tone as the poor wretch left the office. In all this there was so great an aggravation of his misery! It was only too manifest that every one suspected him of something. Here he was ready to give away,—absolutely anxious to give away out of his own pocket,—a very large sum of money to his cousin who had misused and insulted him, by signing the document without a moment's

hesitation as soon as it was presented to him, and yet he was rebuked for his demeanour as he did it. Oh, that accursed will! Why had his uncle summoned him away from the comparative comfort of his old London life?

When he returned to the book-room, he made himself sure that the volume had not been moved. There was a slight variation in the positions of that and the two neighbouring books, the centre one having been pushed a quarter of an inch further in; and all this he had marked so accurately that he could not but know whether any hand had been at the shelf. He did not go near to the shelf, but could see the variation as he stood at the table. His eye had become minutely exact as to the book and its position. Then he resolved that he would not look at the book again, would not turn a glance on it unless it might be when he had made up his mind to reveal its contents. His neck became absolutely stiff with the efforts necessary not to look at the book.

That night he wrote a letter to his cousin, which was as follows;—

"My dear Isabel,

"I have been into Carmarthen to-day, and I have signed a document in the presence of Mr. Apjohn, by which four thousand pounds is made over to you as a charge upon the property. He stated that you had what might be called a right to that money, and I perfectly agreed with him. I have never doubted about the money since my uncle's will was read. The agent who receives the rents will remit to you one hundred pounds half yearly for the next two years. By that time I shall have been able to raise the money, and you shall then be paid in full.

"I don't want you to take this as any favour from me. I quite understood what you said to me. I think that it was undeserved, and, after, all that I have suffered in this matter, cruel on your part. It was not my fault that my uncle changed his mind backwards and

forwards. I never asked him for the estate. I came to Llanfeare only because he bade me. I have taken possession of the property only when told to do so by Mr. Apjohn. If I could not make myself pleasant to you, it was not my fault. I think you ought to be ashamed of what you said to me,—so soon after the old man's death!

"But all that has nothing to do with the money, which, of course, you must take. As for myself, I do not think I shall continue to live here. My uncle has made the place a nest of hornets for me, and all through no fault of my own. Should you like to come and live here as owner, you are welcome to do so on paying me a certain sum out of the rents. I am quite in earnest, and you had better think of it.

"Yours truly,

"Henry Jones."

His resolution as to the first portion of the above letter was taken as he returned in the

carriage from Carmarthen; but it was not until the pen was in his hand, and the angry paragraph had been written in which he complained of her cruelty, that he thought of making that offer to her as to the residence. The idea flashed across his mind, and then was carried out instantly. Let her come and live there, and let her find the will herself if she pleased. If her mind was given to godly reading, this might be her reward. Such conduct would, at any rate, show them all that he was afraid of nothing. He would, he thought, if this could be arranged, still remain at his office; would give up that empty title of Squire of Llanfeare, and live in such comfort as might come to him from the remittances which would be made to him on account of the rents, till—that paper had been found. Such was his last plan, and the letter proposing it was duly sent to the post office.

On the following day he again acknowledged the necessity of going about the place,—so

that the feeling of mystery might, if possible, be gradually dissipated,—and he went out for a walk. He roamed down towards the cliffs, and there sat in solitude, looking out upon the waters. His mind was still intent upon the book. Oh, if the book could be buried there below the sea,—be drowned and no hand of his be necessary for the drowning! As he sat there, feeling himself constrained to remain away from the house for a certain period, he fell asleep by degrees and dreamed. He dreamt that he was out there in a little boat all alone, with the book hidden under the seats, and that he rowed himself out to sea till he was so far distant from the shore that no eye could see him. Then he lifted the book, and was about to rid himself for ever of his burden;—when there came by a strong man swimming. The man looked up at him so as to see exactly what he was doing, and the book was not thrown over, and the face of the swimming man was the face of that

young Cantor who had been so determined in his assertion that another will had been made.

The dream was still vivid as a reality to his intellect when he was awakened suddenly, whether by a touch or a sound he did not know. He looked up, and there was the young man whom he had seen swimming to him across the sea. The land he was on was a portion of old Cantor's farm, and the presence of the son need not have surprised him had he thought of it; but it was to him as though the comer had read every thought of his mind, and had understood clearly the purport of the dream.

"Be that you, Squire?" said the young man.

"Yes, it is I," said Cousin Henry, as he lay trembling on the grass.

"I didn't know you was here, sir. I didn't know you ever com'd here. Good morning, sir." Then the young man passed on, not caring to have any further conversation with a landlord so little to his taste.

After this he returned home almost cowed. But on the following morning he determined to make a still further effort, so that he might, if possible, return to the ways of the world, which were already becoming strange to him from the desolation of the life which he had been leading. He went out, and, taking the road by the church, up the creek, he came at about a distance of two miles from his own house to Coed, the farmstead of John Griffiths, the farmer who held the largest number of acres on the property. At the garden gate he found his tenant, whom he was inclined to think somewhat more civil,—a little, perhaps, more courteous,—than others who had met him.

"Yes, sir," said John Griffiths, "it's a fine day, and the crops are doing well enough. Would you like to come in and see the missus? She'll take it civil."

Cousin Henry entered the house and said a few words to the farmer's wife, who was not, however, specially gracious in her demeanour.

He had not the gift of saying much to such persons, and was himself aware of his own deficiency. But still he had done something,—had shown that he was not afraid to enter a tenant's house. As he was leaving, the farmer followed him to the gate, and began to offer him some advice, apparently in kindness.

"You ought to be doing something, sir, with those paddocks between the shrubberies and the road."

"I suppose so, Mr. Griffiths; but I am no farmer."

"Then let them, sir. William Griffiths will be glad enough to have them and pay you rent. The old Squire didn't like that the land he had held himself should go into other hands. But he never did much good with them lately, and it's different now."

"Yes, it's different now. I don't think I shall live here, Mr. Griffiths."

"Not live at Llanfeare?"

"I think not. I'm not quite fitted to the

place. It isn't my doing, but among you all, I fear, you don't like me." As he said this he tried to carry it off with a laugh.

"You'd live down that, Squire, if you did your duty, and was good to the people;—and took no more than was your own. But perhaps you don't like a country life."

"I don't like being where I ain't liked; that's the truth of it, Mr. Griffiths."

"Who'll come in your place, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

"Miss Brodrick shall,—if she will. It was not I who asked my uncle to bring me here."

"But she is not to have the property?"

"Not the property;—at least I suppose not. But she shall have the house and the grounds, and the land adjacent. And she shall manage it all, dividing the rents with me, or something of that kind. I have offered it to her, but I do not say that she will agree. In the meantime, if you will come up and see me

sometimes, I will take it as a kindness. I do not know that I have done any harm, so as to be shunned."

Then Farmer Griffiths readily said that he would go up occasionally and see his landlord.

CHAPTER XI.

ISABEL AT HEREFORD.

Isabel had not been many hours at home at Hereford before, as was natural, her father discussed with her the affairs of the property and her own peculiar interest in the will which had at last been accepted. It has to be acknowledged that Isabel was received somewhat as an interloper in the house. She was not wanted there, at any rate by her stepmother,—hardly by her brothers and sisters,—and was, perhaps, not cordially desired even by her father. She and her stepmother had never been warm friends. Isabel herself was clever and high-minded; but high-spirited also, imperious, and sometimes hard. It may

be said of her that she was at all points a gentlewoman. So much could hardly be boasted of the present Mrs. Brodrick; and, as was the mother, so were that mother's children. The father was a gentleman, born and bred as such; but in his second marriage he had fallen a little below his station, and, having done so, had accommodated himself to his position. Then there had come many children, and the family had increased quicker than the income. So it had come to pass that the attorney was not a wealthy man. This was the home which Isabel had been invited to leave when, now many years since, she had gone to Llanfeare to become her uncle's darling. There her life had been very different from that of the family at Hereford. She had seen but little of society, but had been made much of, and almost worshipped, by those who were around her. She was to be,—was to have been,—the Lady of Llanfeare. By every tenant about

the place she had been loved and esteemed. With the servants she had been supreme. Even at Carmarthen, when she was seen there, she was regarded as the great lady, the acknowledged heiress, who was to have, at some not very distant time, all Llanfeare in her own hands. It was said of her, and said truly, that she was possessed of many virtues. She was charitable, careful for others, in no way self-indulgent, sedulous in every duty, and, above all things, affectionately attentive to her uncle. But she had become imperious, and inclined to domineer, if not in action, yet in spirit. She had lived much among books, had delighted to sit gazing over the sea with a volume of poetry in her hand, truly enjoying the intellectual gifts which had been given her. But she had, perhaps, learnt too thoroughly her own superiority, and was somewhat apt to look down upon the less refined pleasure of other people. And now her altered position in regard to

wealth rather increased than diminished her foibles. Now, in her abject poverty,—for she was determined that it should be abject,—she would be forced to sustain her superiority solely by her personal gifts. She determined that, should she find herself compelled to live in her father's house, she would do her duty thoroughly by her stepmother and her sisters. She would serve them as far as it might be within her power; but she could not giggle with the girls, nor could she talk little gossip with Mrs. Brodrick. While there was work to be done, she would do it, though it should be har , menial, and revolting; but when her work was done, there would be her books.

It will be understood that, such being her mood and such her character, she would hardly make herself happy in her father's house,—or make others happy. And then, added to all this, there was the terrible question of money! When last at Hereford, she

had told her father that, though her uncle had revoked his grand intention in her favour, still there would be coming to her enough to prevent her from being a burden on the resources of her family. Now that was all changed. She was determined that it should be changed. If her father should be unable or unwilling to support her, she would undergo any hardship, any privation; but would certainly not accept bounty from the hands of her cousin. Some deed had been done, she felt assured,—some wicked deed, and Cousin Henry had been the doer of it. She and she alone had heard the last words which her uncle had spoken, and she had watched the man's face narrowly when her uncle's will had been discussed in the presence of the tenants. She was quite sure. Let her father say what he might, let her stepmother look at her ever so angrily with her greedy, hungry eyes, she would take no shilling from her Cousin Henry. Though

she might have to die in the streets, she would take no bread from her Cousin Henry's hand.

She herself began the question of the money on the day after her arrival. "Papa," she said, "there is to be nothing for me after all."

Now Mr. Apjohn, the lawyer, like a cautious family solicitor as he was, had written to Mr. Brodrick, giving him a full account of the whole affair, telling him of the legacy of four thousand pounds, explaining that there was no fund from which payment could be legally exacted, but stating also that the circumstances of the case were of such a nature as to make it almost impossible that the new heir should refuse to render himself liable for the amount. Then had come another letter saying that the new heir had assented to do so.

"Oh, yes, there will, Isabel," said the father.

Then she felt that the fighting of the battle was incumbent upon her, and she was determined to fight it. "No, papa, no; not a shilling."

"Yes, my dear, yes," he said, smiling. "I have heard from Mr. Apjohn, and understand all about it. The money, no doubt, is not there; but your cousin is quite prepared to charge the estate with the amount. Indeed, it would be almost impossible for him to refuse to do so. No one would speak to him were he to be so base as that. I do not think much of your Cousin Henry, but even Cousin Henry could not be so mean. He has not the courage for such villany."

"I have the courage," said she.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, papa, do not be angry with me! Nothing,—nothing shall induce me to take my Cousin Henry's money."

"It will be your money,—your money by your uncle's will. It is the very sum which

he himself has named as intended for you."

"Yes, papa; but Uncle Indefer had not got the money to give. Neither you nor I should be angry with him; because he intended the best."

"I am angry with him," said the attorney in wrath, "because he deceived you and deceived me about the property."

"Never; he deceived no one. Uncle Indefer and deceit never went together."

"There is no question of that now," said the father. "He made some slight restitution, and there can, of course, be no question as to your taking it."

"There is a question, and there must be a question, papa. I will not have it. If my being here would be an expense too great for you, I will go away."

"Where will you go?"

"I care not where I go. I will earn my bread. If I cannot do that, I would rather

live in the poorhouse than accept my cousin's money."

"What has he done?"

"I do not know."

"As Mr. Apjohn very well puts it, there is no question whatsoever as to gratitude, or even of acceptance. It is a matter of course. He would be inexpressibly vile were he not to do this."

"He is inexpressibly vile."

"Not in this respect. He is quite willing. You will have nothing to do but to sign a receipt once every half-year till the whole sum shall have been placed to your credit."

"I will sign nothing on that account; nor will I take anything."

"But why not? What has he done?"

"I do not know. I do not say that he has done anything. I do not care to speak of him. Pray do not think, papa, that I covet the estate, or that I am unhappy about that. Had he been pleasant to my uncle and good to

the tenants, had he seemed even to be like a man, I could have made him heartily welcome to Llanfeare. I think my uncle was right in choosing to have a male heir. I should have done so myself,—in his place."

"He was wrong, wickedly wrong, after his promises."

"There were no promises made to me: nothing but a suggestion, which he was, of course, at liberty to alter if he pleased. We need not, however, go back to that, papa. There he is, owner of Llanfeare, and from him, as owner of Llanfeare, I will accept nothing. Were I starving in the street I would not take a crust of bread from his fingers."

Over and over again the conversation was renewed, but always with the same result. Then there was a correspondence between the two attorneys, and Mr. Apjohn undertook to ask permission from the Squire to pay the money to the father's receipt without asking any acknowledgment from the daughter. On

hearing this, Isabel declared that if this were done she would certainly leave her father's house. She would go out of it, even though she should not know whither she was going. Circumstances should not be made so to prevail upon her as to force her to eat meat purchased by her cousin's money.

Thus it came to pass that Isabel's new home was not made comfortable to her on her first arrival. Her stepmother would hardly speak to her, and the girls knew that she was in disgrace. There was Mr. Owen, willing enough, as the stepmother knew, to take Isabel away and relieve them all from this burden, and with the 4000*l.* Mr. Owen would, no doubt, be able at once to provide a home for her. But Mr. Owen could hardly do this without some help. And even though Mr. Owen should be so generous,—and thus justify the name of "softie" which Mrs. Brodrick would sometimes give him in discussing his character with her own daughters,—how preferable would

it be to have a relation well-provided! To Mrs. Brodrick the girl's objection was altogether unintelligible. The more of a Philistine Cousin Henry was, the more satisfaction should there be in fleecing him. To refuse a legacy because it was not formal was, to her thinking, an act of insanity. To have the payment of one refused to her because of informality would have been heart-breaking. But the making of such a difficulty as this she could not stomach. Could she have had her will, she would have been well pleased to whip the girl! Therefore Isabel's new home was not pleasant to her.

At this time Mr. Owen was away, having gone for his holiday to the Continent. To all the Brodricks it was a matter of course that he would marry Isabel as soon as he came back. There was no doubt that he was "a softie." But then how great is the difference between having a brother-in-law well off, and a relation tightly constrained by closely limited means!

To refuse,—even to make a show of refusing,—those good things was a crime against the husband who was to have them. Such was the light in which Mrs. Brodrick looked at it. To Mr. Brodrick himself there was an obstinacy in it which was sickening to him. But to Isabel's thinking the matter was very different. She was as firmly resolved that she would not marry Mr. Owen as that she would not take her cousin's money ;—almost as firmly resolved.

Then there came the angry letter from Cousin Henry, containing two points which had to be considered. There was the offer to her to come to Llanfeare, and live there as though she was herself the owner. That, indeed, did not require much consideration. It was altogether out of the question, and only dwelt in her thoughts as showing how quickly the man had contrived to make himself odious to every one about the place. His uncle, he said, had made the place a nest of hornets to him.

Isabel declared that she knew why the place was a nest of hornets. There was no one about Llanfeare to whom so unmanly, so cringing, so dishonest a creature would not be odious. She could understand all that.

But then there was the other point, and on that her mind rested long.

"I think you ought to be ashamed of what you said to me,—so soon after the old man's death."

She sat long in silence thinking of it, meditating whether he had been true in that,—whether it did behove her to repent her harshness to the man. She remembered well her words;—"We take presents from those we love, not from those we despise."

They had been hard words—quite unjustifiable unless he had made himself guilty of something worse than conduct that was simply despicable. Not because he had been a poor creature, not because he had tormented the old man's last days by an absence of all

generous feeling, not because he had been altogether unlike what, to her thinking, a Squire of Llanfeare should be, had she answered him with those crushing words. It was because at the moment she had believed him to be something infinitely worse than that.

Grounding her aversion on such evidence as she had,—on such evidence as she thought she had,—she had brought against him her heavy accusation. She could not tell him to his face that he had stolen the will, she could not accuse him of felony, but she had used such quick mode of expression as had come to her for assuring him that he stood as low in her esteem as a felon might stand. And this she had done when he was endeavouring to perform to her that which had been described to him as a duty! And now he had turned upon her and rebuked her,—rebuked her as he was again endeavouring to perform the same duty,—rebuked her as it was

so natural that a man should do who had been subjected to so gross an affront!

She hated him, despised him, and in her heart condemned him. She still believed him to have been guilty. Had he not been guilty, the beads of perspiration would not have stood upon his brow; he would not have become now red, now pale, by sudden starts; he would not have quivered beneath her gaze when she looked into his face. He could not have been utterly mean as he was, had he not been guilty. But yet,—and now she saw it with her clear-seeing intellect, now that her passion was in abeyance,—she had not been entitled to accuse him to his face. If he were guilty, it was for others to find it out, and for others to accuse him. It had been for her as a lady, and as her uncle's niece, to accept him in her uncle's house as her uncle's heir. No duty could have compelled her to love him, no duty would have required her to accept even his friendship. But she was aware

that she had misbehaved herself in insulting him. She was ashamed of herself in that she had not been able to hide her feelings within her own high heart, but had allowed him to suppose that she had been angered because she had been deprived of her uncle's wealth. Having so resolved, she wrote to him as follows;—

"My dear Henry,

"Do not take any further steps about the money, as I am quite determined not to accept it. I hope it will not be sent, as there would only be the trouble of repaying it. I do not think that it would do for me to live at Llanfeare, as I should have no means of supporting myself, let alone the servants. The thing is of course out of the question. You tell me that I ought to be ashamed of myself for certain words that I spoke to you. They should not have been spoken. I am ashamed of myself, and I now send you my apology.

"Yours truly,

"Isabel Brodrick."

The reader may perhaps understand that these words were written by her with extreme anguish; but of that her Cousin Henry understood nothing.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. OWEN.

In this way Isabel spent four very uncomfortable weeks in her new home before Mr. Owen returned to Hereford. Nor was her discomfort much relieved by the prospect of his return. She knew all the details of his circumstances, and told herself that the man would be wrong to marry without any other means than those he at present possessed. Nor did she think of herself that she was well qualified to be the wife of a poor gentleman. She believed that she could starve if it were required of her, and support her sufferings with fortitude. She believed that she could work,—work from morning till night, from week to week, from

month to month, without complaining; but she did not think that she could make herself sweet as a wife should be sweet to a husband with a threadbare coat, or that she could be tender as a mother should be tender while dividing limited bread among her children. To go and die and have done with it, if that might be possible, was the panacea of her present troubles most commonly present to her mind. Therefore, there was no comfort to her in that promised coming of her lover of which the girls chattered to her continually. She had refused her lover when she held the proud position of the heiress of Llanfeare,—refused him, no doubt, in obedience to her uncle's word, and not in accordance with her own feelings; but still she had refused him. Afterwards, when she had believed that there would be a sum of money coming to her from her uncle's will, there had been room for possible doubt. Should the money have proved sufficient to

cause her to be a relief rather than a burden to the husband, it might have been her duty to marry him, seeing that she loved him with all her heart,—seeing that she was sure of his love. There would have been much against it even then, because she had refused him when she had been a grand lady; but, had the money been forthcoming, there might have been a doubt. Now there could be no doubt. Should she who had denied him her hand because she was her uncle's heiress,—on that avowed ground alone,—should she, now that she was a pauper, burden him with her presence? He, no doubt, would be generous enough to renew his offer. She was well aware of his nobility. But she, too, could be generous, and, as she thought, noble. Thus it was that her spirit spoke within her, bidding her subject all the sweet affections of her heart to a stubborn pride.

The promised return, therefore, of Mr. Owen did not make her very happy.

"He will be here to-morrow," said her step-mother to her. "Mrs. Richards expects him by the late train to-night. I looked in there yesterday and she told me." Mrs. Richards was the respectable lady with whom Mr. Owen lodged.

"I dare say he will," said Isabel wearily —sorry, too, that Mr. Owen's goings and comings should have been investigated.

"Now, Isabel, let me advise you. You cannot be so unjust to Mr. Owen as to make him fancy for a moment that you will refuse your uncle's money. Think of his position,—about two hundred and fifty a year in all! With your two hundred added it would be positive comfort; without it you would be frightfully poor."

"Do you think I have not thought of it?"

"I suppose you must. But then you are so odd and so hard, so unlike any other girl I ever saw. I don't see how you could have the

face to refuse the money, and then to eat his bread."

This was an unfortunate speech as coming from Mrs. Brodrick, because it fortified Isabel in the reply she was bound to make. Hitherto the stepmother had thought it certain that the marriage would take place in spite of such maiden denials as the girl had made; but now the denial had to be repeated with more than maiden vigour.

"I have thought of it," said Isabel,—"thought of it very often, till I have told myself that conduct such as that would be inexpressibly base. What! to eat his bread after refusing him mine when it was believed to be so plentiful! I certainly have not face enough to do that,—neither face nor courage for that. There are ignoble things which require audacity altogether beyond my reach."

"Then you must accept the money from your cousin."

"Certainly not," said Isabel; "neither that

nor yet the position which Mr. Owen will perhaps offer me again."

"Of course he will offer it to you."

"Then he must be told that on no consideration can his offer be accepted."

"That is nonsense. You are both dying for each other."

"Then we must die. But as for that, I think that neither men nor young women die for love now-a-days. If we love each other, we must do without each other, as people have to learn to do without most of the things that they desire."

"I never heard of such nonsense, such wickedness! There is the money. Why should you not take it?"

"I can explain to you, mother," she said sternly, it being her wont to give the appellation but very seldom to her stepmother, "why I should not take Mr. Owen, but I cannot tell you why I cannot take my cousin's money. I can only simply assure you that I will not do

so, and that I most certainly shall never marry any man who would accept it."

"I consider that to be actual wickedness,—wickedness against your own father."

"I have told papa. He knows I will not have the money."

"Do you mean to say that you will come here into this house as an additional burden, as a weight upon your poor father's shoulder, when you have it in your power to relieve him altogether? Do you not know how pressed he is, and that there are your brothers to be educated?" Isabel, as she listened to this, sat silent, looking upon the ground, and her stepmother went on, understanding nothing of the nature of the mind of her whom she was addressing. "He had reason to expect, ample reason, that you would never cost him a shilling. He had been told a hundred times that you would be provided for by your uncle. Do you not know that it was so?"

"I do. I told him so myself when I was last here before Uncle Indefer's death."

"And yet you will do nothing to relieve him? You will refuse this money, though it is your own, when you could be married to Mr. Owen to-morrow?" Then she paused, waiting to find what might be the effect of her eloquence.

"I do not acknowledge papa's right or yours to press me to marry any man."

"But I suppose you acknowledge your right to be as good as your word? Here is the money; you have only got to take it."

"What you mean is that I ought to acknowledge my obligation to be as good as my word. I do. I told my father that I would not be a burden to him, and I am bound to keep to that. He will have understood that at the present moment I am breaking my promise through a mistake of Uncle Indefer's which I could not have anticipated."

"You are breaking your promise because you will not accept money that is your own."

"I am breaking my promise, and that is sufficient. I will go out of the house and will cease to be a burden. If I only knew where I could go, I would begin to-morrow."

"That is all nonsense," said Mrs. Brodrick, getting up and bursting out of the room in anger. "There is the man ready to marry you, and there is the money. Anybody can see with half an eye what is your duty."

Isabel, with all the eyes that she had, could not see what was her duty. That it could not be her duty to take a present of money from the man whom she believed to be robbing her of the estate she felt quite sure. It could not be her duty to bring poverty on a man whom she loved,—especially not as she had refused to confer wealth upon him. It was, she thought, clearly her duty not to be a burden upon her father, as she had told him that no

such burden should fall upon him. It was her duty, she thought, to earn her own bread, or else to eat none at all. In her present frame of mind she would have gone out of the house on the moment if any one would have accepted her even as a kitchenmaid. But there was no one to accept her. She had questioned her father on the matter, and he had ridiculed her idea of earning her bread. When she had spoken of service, he had become angry with her. It was not thus that he could be relieved. He did not want to see his girl a maid-servant or even a governess. It was not thus that she could relieve him. He simply wanted to drive her into his views, so that she might accept the comfortable income which was at her disposal, and become the wife of a gentleman whom every one esteemed. But she, in her present frame of mind, cared little for any disgrace she might bring on others by menial service. She was told that she was a burden, and she desired to cease to be burdensome.

Thinking it over all that night, she resolved that she would consult Mr. Owen himself. It would, she thought, be easy,—or if not easy at any rate feasible,—to make him understand that there could be no marriage. With him she would be on her own ground. He, at least, had no authority over her, and she knew herself well enough to be confident of her own strength. Her father had a certain right to insist. Even her stepmother had a deputed right. But her lover had none. He should be made to understand that she would not marry him,—and then he could advise her as to that project of being governess, housemaid, schoolmistress, or what not.

On the following morning he came, and was soon closeted with her. When he arrived, Isabel was sitting with Mrs. Brodrick and her sisters, but they soon packed up their hemmings and sewings, and took themselves off, showing that it was an understood thing that Isabel and Mr. Owen were to be left together.

The door was no sooner closed than he came up to her, as though to embrace her, as though to put his arm round her waist before she had a moment to retreat, preparing to kiss her as though she were already his own. She saw it all in a moment. It was as though, since her last remembered interview, there had been some other meeting which she had forgotten, —some meeting at which she had consented to be his wife. She could not be angry with him. How can a girl be angry with a man whose love is so good, so true? He would not have dreamed of kissing her had she stood there before him the declared heiress of Llanfeare. She felt more than this. She was sure by his manner that he knew that she had determined not to take her cousin's money. She was altogether unaware that there had already been some talking that morning between him and her father; but she was sure that he knew. How could she be angry with him?

But she escaped. "No, not that," she said. "It must not be so, Mr. Owen;—it must not. It cannot be so."

"Tell me one thing, Isabel, before we go any further, and tell me truly. Do you love me?"

She was standing about six feet from him, and she looked hard into his face, determined not to blush before his eyes for a moment. But she could hardly make up her mind as to what would be the fitting answer to his demand.

"I know," said he, "that you are too proud to tell me a falsehood."

"I will not tell you a falsehood."

"Do you love me?" There was still a pause. "Do you love me as a woman should love the man she means to marry?"

"I do love you!"

"Then, in God's name, why should we not kiss? You are my love and I am yours. Your father and mother are satisfied that it should be so. Seeing that we are so, is it a

disgrace to kiss? Having won your heart, may I not have the delight of thinking that you would wish me to be near you?"

"You must know it all," she said, "though it may be unwomanly to tell so much."

"Know what?"

"There has never been a man whose touch has been pleasant to me;—but I could revel in yours. Kiss you? I could kiss your feet at this moment, and embrace your knees. Everything belonging to you is dear to me. The things you have touched have been made sacred to me. The Prayer-Book tells the young wife that she should love her husband till death shall part them. I think my love will go further than that."

"Isabel! Isabel!"

"Keep away from me! I will not even give you my hand to shake till you have promised to be of one mind with me. I will not become your wife."

"You shall become my wife!"

"Never! Never! I have thought it out, and I know that I am right. Things have been hard with me."

"Not to me! They will not have been hard to me when I shall have carried my point with you."

"I was forced to appear before your eyes as the heiress of my uncle."

"Has that made any difference with me?"

"And I was forced to refuse you in obedience to him who had adopted me."

"I understand all that very completely."

"Then he made a new will, and left me some money."

"Of all that I know, I think, every particular."

"But the money is not there." At this he nodded his head as though smiling at her absurdity in going back over circumstances which were so well understood by both of them. "The money is offered to me by my cousin, but I will not take it."

"As to that I have nothing to say. It is the one point on which, when we are married, I shall decline to give you any advice."

"Mr. Owen," and now she came close to him, but still ready to spring back should it be necessary, "Mr. Owen, I will tell you what I have told no one else."

"Why me?"

"Because I trust you as I trust no one else."

"Then tell me."

"There is another will. There was another will rather, and he has destroyed it."

"Why do you say that? You should not say that. You cannot know it."

"And, therefore, I say it only to you, as I would to my own heart. The old man told me so—in his last moments. And then there is the look of the man. If you could have seen how his craven spirit cowered beneath my eyes!"

"One should not judge by such indications.

One cannot but see them and notice them; but one should not judge."

"You would have judged had you seen. You could not have helped judging. Nothing, however, can come of it, except this,—that not for all the world would I take his money."

"It may be right, Isabel, that all that should be discussed between you and me,—right if you wish it. It will be my delight to think that there shall be no secret between us. But, believe me, dearest, it can have no reference to the question between us."

"Not that I should be absolutely penniless?"

"Not in the least."

"But it will, Mr. Owen. In that even my father agrees with me." In this she was no doubt wrong. Her father had simply impressed upon her the necessity of taking the money because of her lover's needs. "I will not be a burden at any rate to you; and as I cannot go to you without being a

burden, I will not go at all. What does it matter whether there be a little more suffering or a little less? What does it matter?"

"It matters a great deal to me."

"A man gets over that quickly, I think."

"So does a woman,—if she be the proper sort of woman for getting over her difficulties of that kind. I don't think you are."

"I will try."

"I won't." This he said, looking full into her face. "My philosophy teaches me to despise the grapes which hang too high, but to make the most of those which come within my reach. Now, I look upon you as being within my reach."

"I am not within your reach."

"Yes; pardon me for my confidence, but you are. You have confessed that you love me."

"I do."

"Then you will not be so wicked as to deny to me that which I have a right to demand?

If you love me as a woman should love the man who is to become her husband, you have no right to refuse me. I have made good my claim, unless there be other reasons."

"There is a reason."

"None but such as I have to judge of. Had your father objected, that would have been a reason; or when your uncle disapproved because of the property, that was a reason. As to the money, I will never ask you to take it, unless you can plead that you yourself are afraid of the poverty—." Then he paused, looking at her as though he defied her to say so much on her own behalf. She could not say that, but sat there panting, frightened by his energy.

"Nor am I," he continued very gently, "the least in the world. Think of it, and you will find that I am right; and then, when next I come, then, perhaps, you will not refuse to kiss me." And so he went.

Oh, how she loved him! How sweet would

it be to submit her pride, her independence, her maiden reticences to such a man as that! How worthy was he of all worship, of all confidence, of all service! How infinitely better was he than any other being that had ever crossed her path! But yet she was quite sure that she would not marry him.

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